

TAUNTON'S

FEBRUARY / MARCH 1995 NO. 7

C fine COOKING

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO COOK

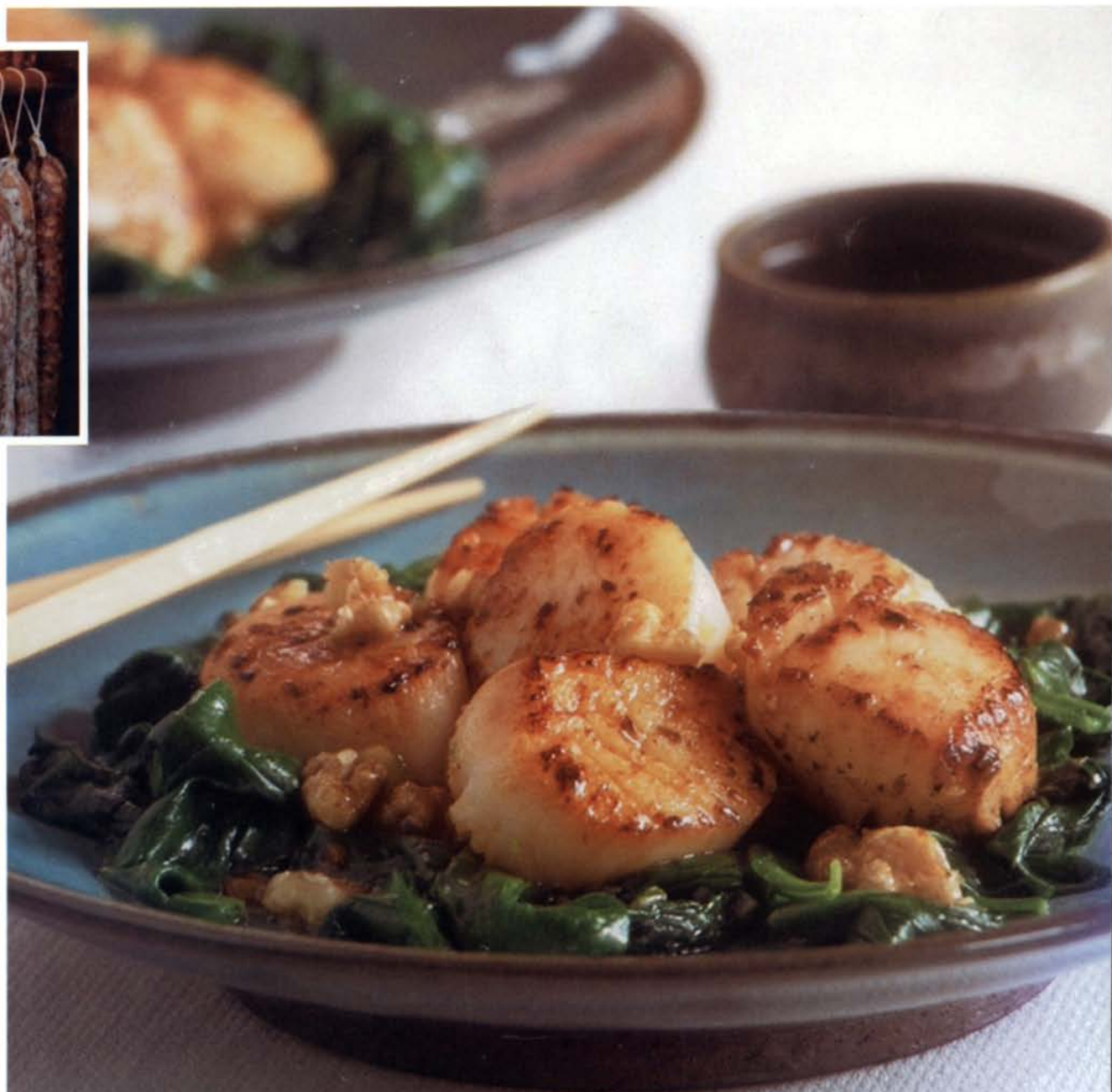


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If you're seeking an outlet for your thoughts on topics like our most recent baking article, genetically engineered tomatoes, or your food and cooking philosophies, look no further. Send your letters on these and other topics to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

TO COUNT CALORIES...

Like Diana Stiegler in *Fine Cooking* #5, I'm curious to know if you plan to add the nutritional analysis to your recipes. Having recently lost 40 pounds, it's very important to me to keep track of calories and fat in the foods I prepare....Do you plan to begin adding this information?

—Kathy Wessels,
Mount Prospect, IL

...OR NOT TO COUNT?

Nutritional analysis, fat content, etc., have no place in your first-rate, intelligent magazine. For those so inclined, this information can be found in food sections of newspapers, in an abundance of food magazines that pander to this trendy "fat-free" society, in endless cookbooks on the subject, and on TV. Do we truly need more of it? These comments are provoked (and I do mean *provoked*) by a letter from a reader in *Fine Cooking* #5. After all, your cover reads "For people who love to cook"—can we not do without the preachy stuff?

—Alberto Bice,
Saint Martin,
Netherland Antilles

Editors' reply: During our first year, we've received lots of letters like Kathy Wessels' and just as many like Alberto Bice's. We're happy that our readers have strong opinions, and we think that our new approach to presenting nutritional data will satisfy people who do count grams and calories and those who don't. Starting with this issue, we will publish basic nutritional values (proteins, carbohydrates, fat, percentage of calories from fat, sodium, and fiber) for each recipe. The data will be located in a special index toward the back of the magazine; in this issue, see p. 93.

Fine Cooking will continue to offer a mix of recipes, ranging from dishes as

rich as Sautéed Foie Gras to those as lean as Garlicky Greens with Penne Pasta & Spicy Tomato Broth. We think all food is healthy when it's been made using good techniques and good ingredients, and we're happy to provide as much information as possible about each dish to our readers.

RISKS OF STORING GARLIC IN OIL

The advice given to the reader who asked "What are the safety limitations of storing fresh, chopped garlic in olive oil?" (Q&A, *Fine Cooking* #5) was erroneous. The reader's concern of possible food poisoning was indeed very real. Garlic products packed in oil are a potential carrier of the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*, the anaerobic organism, commonly found in soil, that causes botulism.

The control measures for using garlic in oil preparations are:

- to make small batches that can be used quickly, or
- to use commercially prepared garlic in oil products, and
- to always keep all products refrigerated to reduce the multiplication of bacteria.

Call your local health department or cooperative extension office for further information on food-poisoning issues.

—Elaine Lickteig, M.S., R.D.
Naugatuck, CT

Editors' reply: We'd like to thank Elaine Lickteig for pointing out the possible safety risks of storing garlic in oil, but we note that, while Janet Hazen's answer emphasizes the quality of the garlic's flavor, her answer does meet the guidelines outlined above. Her first recommendation is *not* to store garlic this way at all, but rather to chop it fresh as needed. For those who do choose to conserve their own garlic this way, Hazen counsels, "Always keep chopped garlic in oil in the refrigerator," and she suggests "a two- to four-day life span" for the batch.

SOURDOUGH AND SOUR LEMONS

"Conquering San Francisco Sourdough" (*Fine Cooking* #2) has had me churning out weekly batches of fantastic loaves. I make all the household bread, and since reading that article, I have used only my own four-year-old starter and Van Kirk's potato starter—no commercial yeast.

fine COOKING

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The method even works for our favorite whole-wheat bread. I start with a base of whole, cooked, wheat berries munched up in the food processor, flavor it with malt from the local brew shop, and add the two starters, salt, oil, and all-purpose and whole-wheat flours.

Also in the same issue, we loved "Marinating Vegetables Mediterranean Style" and have made several batches of both preserved lemons and limes. Incidentally, for those frugal souls out there, you can use rinds from any lemons you squeeze and treat them in the same way—not as pretty as the whole slices, but a separate bottling produces great stuff to chop into salads, pastas, etc.

—Jennifer Howe,
Victoria, BC

WANTED: IDEAL COOKING SOFTWARE

I began putting favorite recipes on a computer "cooking program," but I stopped when I realized the program had many prerecorded ingredients that didn't fit my recipes.

Some research on computer recipe programs would be very helpful. There really isn't anything out there that tells me what's available.

—Mardee Wyman,
Boise, ID

COOKING WITH WOOD

I was surprised to see a question in *Fine Cooking* #5 about the feasibility of using a wood stove to prepare food for large numbers of people.

I can tell from experience that it can be done. You must be prepared to do a number of things. First, fuel must be car-

ried to the stove and ashes have to be removed. Since the heat gauges on the oven door are not usually accurate, you must learn to judge temperature by putting your hand in the oven for a quick feel. It isn't difficult. I can judge better with my hand than the thermostat can. You must also be prepared to juggle pots and pans around as the surface temperature tends to vary from spot to spot.

The kind of wood you use also has a bearing on the temperature. Oak tends to burn hot and steady and gives a nice bed of coals. Other hard woods work fairly well, but soft woods burn fast and heat fluctuates from too hot to cool, so you must be ready to add more fuel as needed. You can't leave your pots to simmer on a wood stove and go shopping as you can with a more controlled heat source.

Now that I've given the basics, I want to say that there's no better loaf of bread or pot of beans than those that are cooked with wood. It's hard work, but there are times when it's worth the effort.

—Amy McQuillan,
Turtle Lake, WI

KEEPING AND USING DEMI-SEL

Jean Jacob talks about home-cured pork (*Fine Cooking* #2, p. 58). Could you please ask Jean how long cured pork may be kept in the refrigerator (before cooking), and can it be frozen in *demi-sel* condition? Also, what are some suggested recipes using *demi-sel* pork?

—Erika Kuelke,
Toms River, NJ

Editors' reply: Jean says you can keep the *demi-sel* pork in the refrigerator for about two weeks, and it's even better when you

let it stay in the brine. Cooked *demi-sel* pork can be frozen, but Jean doesn't recommend freezing uncooked *demi-sel*—too many juices would be lost. As to the best uses for *demi-sel* pork, Jean says you can use it the same way you would a fine piece of ham—in quiches, cassoulets, salads, or as a seasoning ingredient in sautés. If your *demi-sel* is lean enough, a slice makes a fine dish on its own.

NO SMOKING IN THE HOUSE

Fine Cooking #4 had an article titled "Roasting a Chicken to Perfection." I took the author's advice to heart, bought the best fresh chicken I could find, and followed his instructions completely. The bird was beautiful! Actually, I thought it presented even better than the bird shown in the article. It was moist and tender; the flavor was wonderful. The pan-reduced sauce was perfect.

Unfortunately, there is bad news too. As the bird cooked, first on one side and then the other, it happily splattered hot grease and oil all over the 475°F oven. Smoke and the odor of the burning grease overwhelmed the nearby exhaust fan and spread through the house. This continued long after the chicken had satisfied our palates, since we then had to turn the oven on self-clean. My wife's eyes watered and burned, and they were red and sore the next morning. She said the chicken was wonderful, but if I did it again, out I went! Guess I'll have to just use my vertical roaster and settle for an "Almost Perfect Chicken" or find another kitchen if I'm going to avoid the high cost of divorce.

—John L. Wilson
Houston, TX ♦

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A SWEDISH OBSESSION

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, and we'll try to find a cooking or food professional with the answer.

CREME AND CREAM

What's the difference between crème fraîche and clotted cream?

—Marina Orzano,
Port Chester, NY

Joe Kirk replies: Clotted cream is made from fresh cream that has been heated so that it's reduced by 50% to 60%. This reduction intensifies both the cream's fat content and its sweetness. When the cream cools, it clots.

Crème fraîche is a cultured milk product that's made from cultured cream. At home, you can create *crème fraîche* by gently mixing together two parts cream to one part sour cream and letting this mixture sit at room temperature for five to six hours. When making *crème fraîche*, it's important to use cultured—not acidified—sour cream. Without the culture, the mixture cannot become *crème fraîche*.

Joe Kirk is the president of Beaver Meadow Creamery in DuBois, Pennsylvania.

WINE BOTTLE AESTHETICS

Why do the corks of wine bottles have lead foil covers? Is the cover a mark of quality? Does it have any effect on the wine?

—Jerry Lentz,
Dallas, TX

Josh Eisen replies: The foil cover, also called the “capsule,” is mostly there for looks. However, if the wine was bottled after 1988, the capsule isn't made from lead foil; that's the year lead was banned from wine bottles. The capsules are now made from tin or plastic.

Capsules do have some purpose. They keep the bottle's neck clean from dust and dirt that might get into the wine when it's poured. And if the bottle is sealed with beeswax, the wax gives the cork protection from the elements. For the most part, however, capsules are

merely attractive packaging that can bear the winemaker's sign or seal. It gives the bottle a clean look, but the presence of a capsule doesn't necessarily mean it's a high-quality wine.

In any case, the capsule should be removed by cutting it with a blade just below the lip of the bottle. The lip is designed to keep the wine from dripping when poured, and it also keeps debris that might be caught in the capsule from dripping into the wine.

Josh Eisen is a freelance food and wine writer living in New York City.

TURNING TOUGH BEANS TENDER

What's the best way to cook dried beans? I'm looking for a method that makes both the inside and the outside of the beans tender.

—Leslie Giuliani,
Weston, CT

Allison Scherer replies: The best way to get tender beans in the shortest amount of time is to begin with the hot-soak method. Soaking softens and returns moisture to the beans, which reduces cooking time. This step also makes beans more digestible. (Some of the gas-causing substances dissolve in the soaking water, which is discarded before cooking the beans.)

To soak the beans, rinse them well and put them in a large saucepan; rehydrating will make the beans triple in size. Cover the beans with at least two inches of water; for every two cups of beans, you'll need about ten cups of water. Bring to a boil over high heat, simmer for five to ten minutes, remove the pan from the heat, and let the beans stand for at least an hour, but preferably four hours or more. The longer the beans soak, the more digestible they will become.

For simple boiled beans, drain and rinse the soaked beans and put them in a large saucepan with fresh hot water. The water level should come to about an inch above the beans. You may want to add a tablespoon of butter or oil for every two cups of dry beans to reduce foaming or boil-overs. Seasonings such as garlic or bay leaf may also be added to the cooking water, but don't add salt or acidic ingredients such as tomatoes,

vinegar, wine, or citrus juices; these can toughen the beans. Boil the beans for ten minutes and then simmer until tender (about one to two hours). If the water foams, skim it once or twice. Test for doneness by biting into a few beans. A cup of dried beans will yield about three cups of cooked beans.

Allison Scherer is a spokesperson for the Bean Education Awareness Network.

PRECIOUS SAFFRON

What is the appeal of saffron? In what areas of the world is it grown? How does the area affect its flavor? And how is saffron best used to bring out its full flavor?

—Cynthia Jaworski,
Chicago, IL

Bill Penzey replies: Flavor is saffron's appeal. Saffron tastes like—well, it doesn't really resemble any other spice. This is why people are willing to pay high prices for small amounts—about \$5 for a teaspoon's worth. Saffron has a flavor and aroma that's rich and warm, and it has a beautiful, intense, gold-red color.

Saffron comes from the stamens of a fall-flowering crocus. There are three stamens, attached by a yellow filament, in each flower. It takes about 210,000 stamens to make a pound of saffron, and the stamens must be picked by hand. Saffron comes from Spain, Iran, and Northern India, and while there are flavor variations due to soil and climate, the actual difference is minimal. We don't get much saffron from Iran because of trade problems with that country. Right now, we find saffron from the Kashmir region of India to be of the highest quality.

When shopping for saffron, look for bottles that contain only red stamens with no yellow filament; the filament adds nothing but weight to your purchase. Avoid powdered saffron, which is generally inferior and may contain other ingredients, such as turmeric.

To get the most out of saffron, infuse it in liquid. Add whole saffron threads (crushing is unnecessary) to the liquid that will be used in the dish and let it sit for about ten minutes before adding it to the other ingredients. If you put saf-

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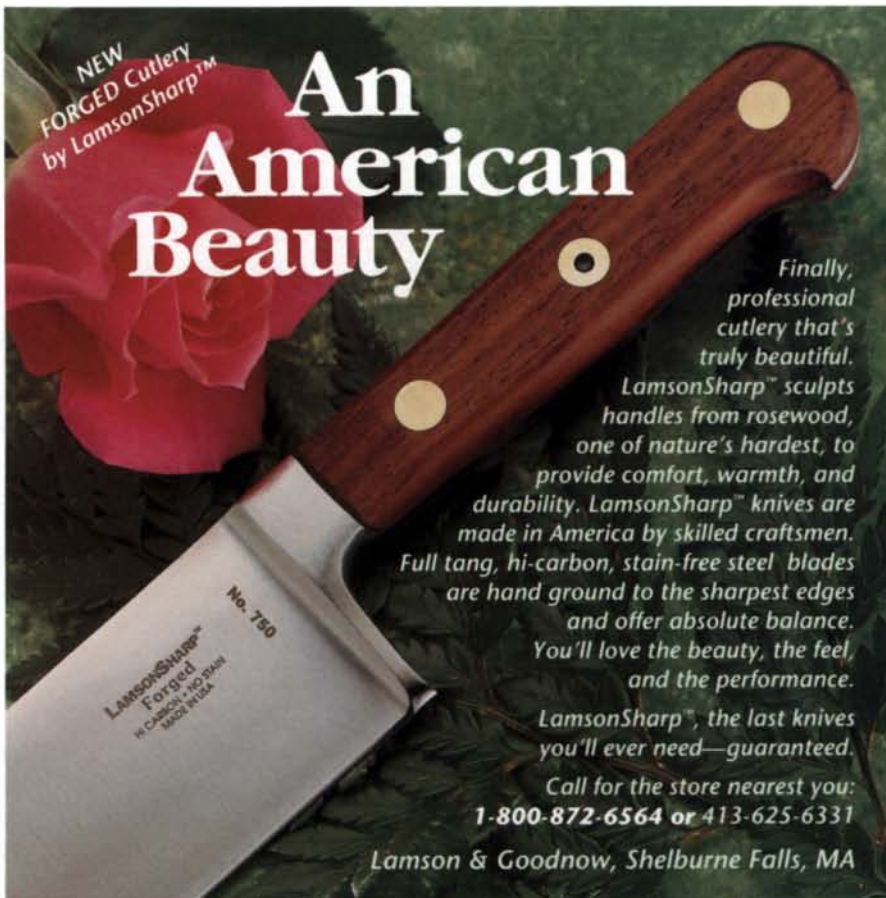
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from directly in hot oil, its volatile flavors will evaporate, leaving you with a savory-smelling kitchen but with less flavor in your food.

Bill Penzey is the owner of Penzey's Spice House Ltd., a mail-order spice house in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

FLOUR, FLOUR, AND FLOUR

What is the difference between all-purpose, cake, and pastry flours? And what is the difference between bleached and unbleached flours?

—Tera Sappington,
Wichita, KS

Marcy Goldman replies: Flour types are defined by the wheat, or combinations of wheats, from which they are milled. Essentially, wheat is classified by type and by growing season. Thus you have hard red spring, hard red winter, soft red winter, spring white, white winter, and durum. The terms “hard” or “strong” and “soft” or “weak” refer to the level of gluten that can

be developed in a particular flour. Strong or hard flours have high levels of gluten both in quantity and quality, making them perfect for breadmaking. Soft or weak flours have less gluten potential, so they're desirable for pastry, cookies, and cakes. Durum wheat is particularly hard and is used almost exclusively for making pasta. White winter wheat is used commercially as a more delicate-tasting whole-wheat flour that performs like a white all-purpose flour.

All-purpose is exactly what it says—it's a medium-strength flour that's designated for baking in the home. This flour blend contains a mixture of hard or soft flours (or both). It's great for muffins, quick breads, cookies, and some sweet yeast goods.

Cake flour is generally milled from soft wheats, is quite fine in consistency, and yields more delicate pound and layer cakes. Pastry flour is also milled from soft wheat, but it is a little higher in protein than cake flour. This flour

gives pastry tenderness but also some body, as well as shortness of crumb. Flour companies sometimes package a “cake and pastry flour,” which has some qualities of both cake and pastry flour. Cake flour can be combined with some all-purpose flour to approximate pastry flour.

If you're serious about baking, a specialty flour company like King Arthur Flour (802/649-3717) can assist you in determining which flours are best for your recipes.

Before flour can be used as an ingredient, it must mature for a couple of months to develop its gluten, which gives a flour its “strength.” Unbleached flour means a flour has been naturally aged and has matured without the addition of chemical bleaching agents, relying instead on oxidation and time to gradually alter the flour pigments and proteins. This flour can be slightly more creamy in color than bleached flour. Unless a flour is labeled “unbleached,” it is regular or “enriched” flour, and it

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has been aged with chemical bleaching agents and then enriched to replace the vitamins that are stripped in this type of refining. Commercial bakers like bleached flour because the chemicals can strengthen a flour and help its performance. For home baking, good-quality unbleached flours perform equally well and don't have chlorine dioxide or other unappealing compounds. Unbleached pastry flour is also available, but it's a little more difficult to work with than bleached. Cake flour is usually available only in a chemically bleached form.

Marcy Goldman is a professional baker and bakery consultant in Montreal, Quebec.

WHERE DO PINE NUTS GROW?

Where do pine nuts come from, and what dictates their price?

—Linda Czapl, Kalamzoo, MI

Tandy Lucero replies: Pine nuts come from stone pine trees. The nuts grow in

the base of the scales that form the pine cone. Pine nuts are usually pricey because stone pines grow only in elevations of 7,000 feet and above, and the year's rainfall is a major determinant of how good the annual crop will be. On average, a bumper crop of pine nuts occurs once every seven years.

Pine nuts are commercially grown in China, the Mediterranean, and New Mexico. Most of the pine nuts we buy come from China. Mediterranean pine nuts tend to be more expensive and are a little longer in shape. In New Mexico, the recent growing season was particularly dry, so the price for New Mexican pine nuts probably will be high this year.

No matter where your pine nuts come from, they contain a large quantity of oil. That means it's best to buy them in small amounts, as they can turn rancid quickly.

Tandy Lucero is the owner of Los Chileros de Nuevo Mexico, a southwestern food products company in Santa Fe.

THE MANY SHADES OF GINGER

When I buy ginger that otherwise appears fresh, I often find it to be blue just under the skin. What is this, and is this ginger safe to use?

—Fiona Cameron, Dartmouth, NS

Bruce Cost replies: There's nothing wrong with "blue" ginger; it's just immature. As it matures, the flesh of this rhizome (it isn't a root; it's a tuber that has roots of its own) goes from white, to blue, and finally to the familiar yellow. Bluish ginger is perfectly safe to use, but it may look a little less appetizing in dishes that use whole slices of ginger. If the ginger is to be chopped or shredded, however, there will be no discernible difference. When buying ginger, color isn't the issue; just select the firmest and heaviest piece of ginger you can find.

Bruce Cost is the chef and consultant for Ginger Island, a restaurant in Berkeley, California. ♦



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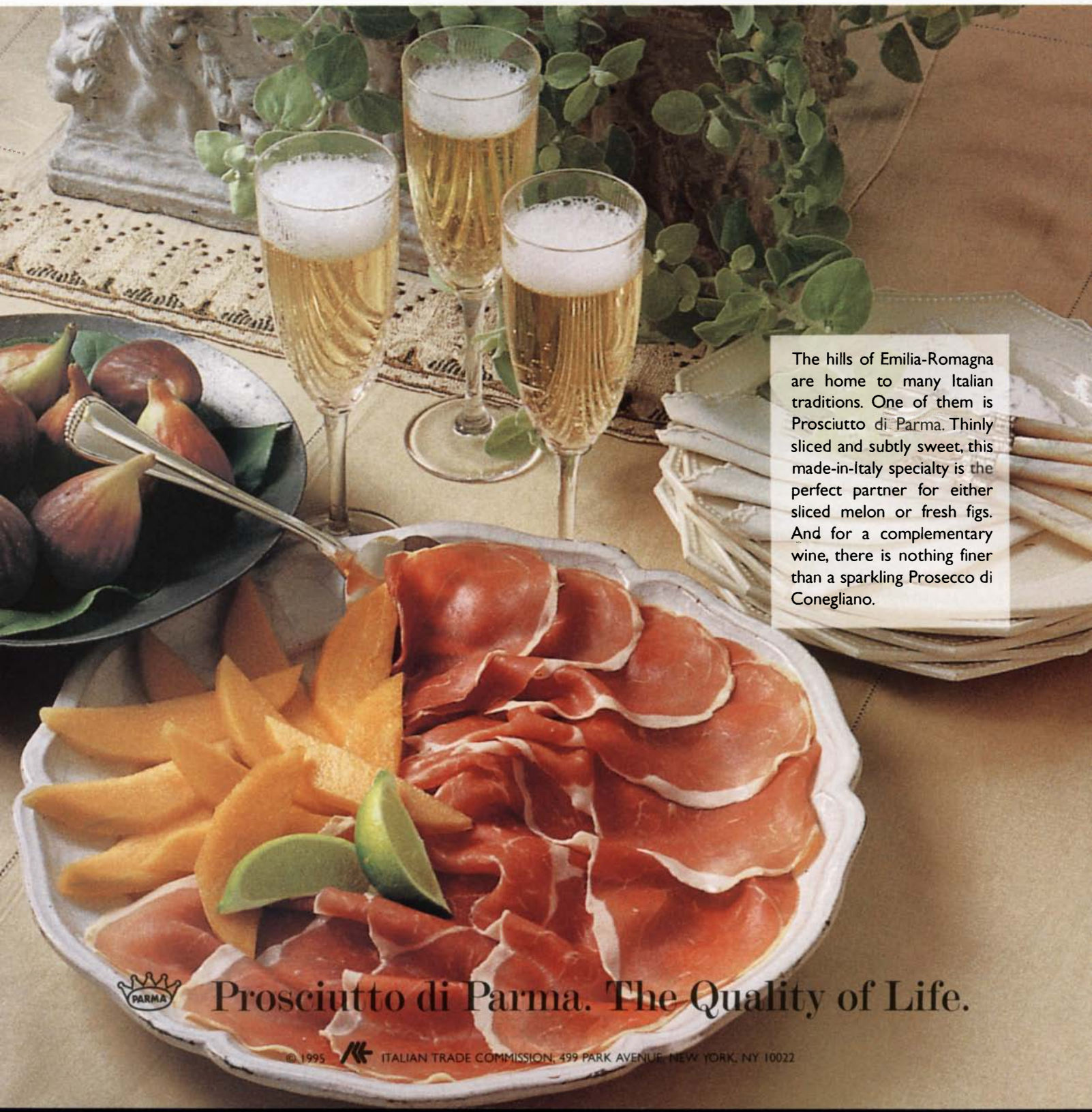
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Just Whites: Just Right for Some



My first test was to whip up some meringue—seemingly the perfect use for a whites-only product since you won't be left with a bowlful of egg yolks.

To make the meringue,



I had to rehydrate the powder. It took longer than I expected for the powder to dissolve in warm water (about 20 minutes), which was an unwelcome delay, compared with the time it takes to separate the same amount of fresh eggs (less than 5 minutes).

After rehydration, the whites whipped quickly and beautifully into voluminous clouds that looked and felt like fresh egg whites. The volume of plain egg whites stood up to a wait of 15 minutes without showing signs of breaking down. I whipped up two more batches and added granulated sugar to one and a cooked sugar syrup to the other; both times I achieved fine meringues. The whipped whites also tolerated a fairly vigorous folding in of ingredients—flour, pecans, and chocolate chips—without collapsing.

While Just Whites worked well as a raw ingredient, I was disappointed with the baked results. I made angel food cake and meringue cookies, and in both I could smell and taste the same sourness that I noticed in the whites' dry state. In fact, a couple of informal tasters in the office asked if the cake was citrus flavored, while others cited a pronounced vinegar taste. I also made a cheese soufflé and some chocolate mousse. These dishes, where the egg whites were paired with a strong-flavored ingredient, were pretty good and the sourness was undetectable.

When the whites aren't needed for leavening, the product can be added to the other dry ingredients in the recipe without rehydrating it, but you need to add extra liquid to compensate. For low-fat bakers

who have found a way to make baked goods with no yolks, Just Whites would be great—there's no need to have eggs in the refrigerator. I tried a spiced carrot muffin and got good results.

The final test for Just Whites was consommé, in which whites are used only as part of the clarifying ingredients, not for eating as part of the dish. The key performance factor was how well they would coagulate, collect the particles in the hot, cloudy stock, and turn it clear. I took a lazy approach and didn't even reconstitute the whites before using them—I wanted this to be a test of convenience as well as effectiveness. I simply mixed the powder into the other clarifying ingredients and continued with the recipe. It worked brilliantly. The stock was crystal-clear, and there was no lingering sour flavor.

Look for Just Whites in supermarkets, or order directly by calling 800/773-8822.

—Abby Dodge is a recipe consultant and food stylist in Fairfield, Connecticut. She is Fine Cooking's recipe tester.

Cooking on Computers

While cooking and computers may not seem to have much in common, online computer communication can be a boon for the food-passionate, whether you're a techno-novice or a seasoned traveller of the information superhighway.

The online services CompuServe, Prodigy, America Online, and the Internet all offer forums specifically devoted to food, wine, and cooking. These vast information stores can be accessed as easily as looking up a single book title at the library. While each service uses its own terminology, there are two general types of information available: the more passive "library" material, which includes documents that users have uploaded onto the system and that hang there ready to be read or downloaded by anyone else. This library may include articles on cooking software, nutrition, and recipes. The second category is the active "message board" type of information. Message boards are where users get into real conversations with other users. There's a menu posted that shows what topics are currently being discussed.

Seated at your PC, you can easily find a dozen recipes for tiramisu, receive specific

There's a new product of interest to cooks who are trying to avoid salmonella, egg yolks, or even the tedious chore of separating eggs. Just Whites, from Deb-El Foods, is pure dried and powdered egg whites, so it's completely free of cholesterol and fat, and it's been pasteurized to eliminate all bacteria, including salmonella. The product has long been available to the food trade, and it's now packaged for retail sale and home use in 8-ounce resealable containers. Each can contains the equivalent of 4½ dozen egg whites, which makes its suggested retail cost of \$4.99 a little higher than the price of the same number of whole fresh eggs. On the other hand, it has a long shelf life, requires no refrigeration, and if it suits your cooking style, is a good, risk-free, low-fat egg product.

I'm a pastry fanatic who always cooks with fresh ingredients, so I was pretty cynical when I started to test Just Whites. After putting it through its paces, I'm not planning on abandoning farm-fresh eggs, but I do admit that the product performed well in certain recipes.

Just Whites is a sticky yellow powder with a strong, sour smell and a tacky texture that makes it difficult to measure. I found that the "dip and sweep" method gave the most consistent measurement.



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Since the sea is always near the land in Italy, seafood and pasta made from the hardest wheat are natural partners. And the made-in-Italy quality speaks for itself in this superb linguine prepared with fresh shellfish and accompanied by a crisp Tocai Friulano white wine from Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

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wine recommendations, obtain a list of every major cooking school in North America, get tips on which knife brand to buy, or download a demo of the latest cooking software. You'll even encounter refreshingly weird trivia, such as CompuServe's Bacchus Wine Forum's recent article about matching wines with Spam. (You can even write to *Fine Cooking*; see p. 4 for our electronic-mail addresses.)

It's hard to imagine how amusing, valuable, and accessible these services are until you've begun to explore them yourself. On paper, online services may sound like little more than high-tech encyclopedias. But when you log on (simply by clicking an onscreen button), you enter a world that's silent yet buzzing with activity. Finding your way through an online service is a matter of clicking on icons, reading menus, and wandering a little bit.

If you're not already a computer jock, you may find it strange to turn to your computer when you're thinking of food and wine. But once you get into the habit, it can be a joy to have a box on your desk

that connects you to other people who are eager to share their interests with you. The glee this realization brings may be tempered by the cold fact that networking with other foodies costs money. Online services charge by the hour, and you'll be amazed at how time seems to collapse on itself when you're chatting in cyberspace about how to tea-smoke shrimp.

To access these services, you need a computer, a modem, and a phone line. Numbers for the major online services are below. Each would be delighted to send you free software as well as some gratis online time. These services also allow you to access the Internet, which, with more than 18 million users, is a solar system unto itself. Those who want to explore that corner of the galaxy would do well to get a good guidebook. They're available in the computer section of major bookstores.

For more information about online services, call America Online (800/827-6364); CompuServe (800/848-8990); and Prodigy (800/776-3449).

—Dana Harris, *Fine Cooking*



Notable Cards

For those who crave stationery with food-related designs, Collins Publishers has launched a series of culinary cards with images and recipes excerpted from its single-subject cookbooks in the *Country Garden Cookbook* series. Choose from apples (shown above), potatoes, lemons, and greens; more subjects will be released later. The 5x7-inch cards have a recipe on the back and are blank inside; they come in sets of 18 (3 each of 6 images) for \$13. Look for them in book or specialty stores, or call 800/331-3761 to order from Collins.

—Martha Holmberg, *Fine Cooking* ♦

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What's Halfway?

To take the guesswork out of a recipe direction that states "boil down the liquid by one-half," I stick the handle of a wooden spoon into the pan and mark the original depth of the liquid on the handle. As the liquid boils down, I check the progress from time to time by putting the wooden handle into the



pan, and I keep boiling until the level of the liquid is at one-half the original mark. If I'm trying to end up with a certain amount of liquid, say two cups, I'll first measure two cups of water into the pan I'll be using and mark that depth on the handle of the spoon. Then I put the real ingredients in the pan and boil them down to that mark.

—Ruby Thomas,
Anacortes, WA

Minced Ginger

Recently when I wound up with two pounds of fresh ginger by mistake, I decided to try freezing it. I cut it into chunks and then minced it fine in my food processor. The texture was perfect. I sealed it in a plastic freezer bag and popped it into the freezer. When I needed ginger, I'd just go to the freezer and break off a piece. I found this method so convenient that now I do it all the time—and you can't tell it from fresh.

—Sharon Howard,
Eugene, OR

Juicing Pineapple

Many people shy away from buying a fresh pineapple because they're afraid that most of it will go bad before they use it all. After I've used the pineapple I need for a particular dish, I cut the rest into one-inch chunks and store them in airtight containers in the freezer. This frozen pineapple can be used to make a delicious juice. Just take the pineapple out of the freezer and allow it to defrost for about half an hour. Put the semi-defrosted pineapple into a blender with some cold water (and sugar if you like a sweeter taste) and blend until the pineapple is liquefied. Strain the juice to remove the rough pulp. The juice is delicious to drink for a healthy addition to breakfast or to use in place of water or orange juice in recipes.

—Marisa A. Valzovano,
North Miami Beach, FL

No-Waste Grinding

After you've finished grinding meat for sausage or pâté in a meat grinder, it's likely that there's still meat left inside the machine. To get this meat out so that you can use it instead of losing it when you wash up, take a two-foot length of plastic wrap, roll it lengthwise, and insert one end of the plastic wrap into the meat grinder as you'd insert the meat. The plastic wrap will act as a bore, pushing the remaining meat out of the grinder and saving the meat you would have lost.

—Walter J. Morrison III,
Buffalo, NY

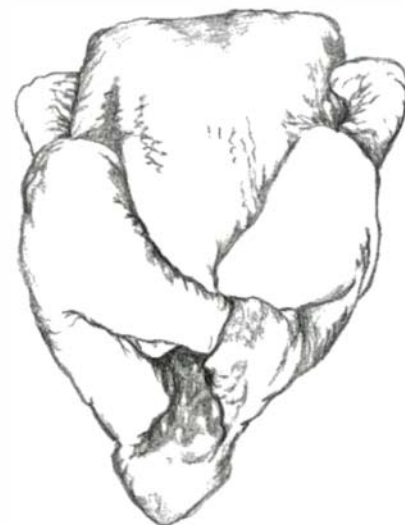
Trussing without String

Here's a way to truss a chicken without using string. After removing the packet of giblets, tuck the wings under the back of the chicken. Next, stick your hand inside the bird and, with your finger, puncture a hole through the meat between the thigh and breast, but don't push through the outer skin.

Take the leg on the other side of the bird, stretch it forward, and twist it to insert the end of the drumstick into the cavity, slipping the end into the hole.



Gently pull the leg away from the chicken to lock it in place. Slip the end of the other leg between the breast and the "locked" leg and tuck it under so that the legs are secure.



—Robert Simmelink,
Waukesha, WI

Save the Wrapper

When you unwrap a stick of butter, some butter usually sticks to the paper or foil. Don't throw the wrapper away.

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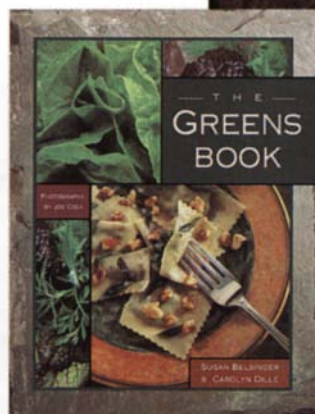
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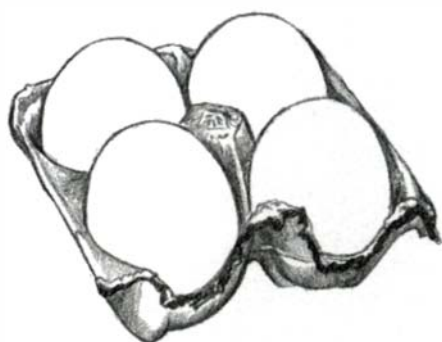
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Instead, fold it up and put it in the freezer. The next time you have a recipe calls for lightly greasing a pan, just unfold the butter wrapper and rub the pan with it.

—Mary MacVean,
Jackson Heights, NY

Nest for Eggs

When gathering all the ingredients together before beginning to cook, eggs can be pesky—they roll around the counter and get in the way. Make a handy homemade tool to hold eggs while they await their turn by cutting a four-egg section from the bottom of a cardboard egg carton. It keeps the eggs



from rolling and you can safely and quickly move all four simultaneously. If you find yourself using six eggs frequently, cut out a six-egg section instead. The mini-carton stores easily in the utensil drawer.

—Mary Sullivan,
Concord, CA

Shaking out Flour

Put flour into a salt shaker and use this to flour a cake or muffin pan or to flour a work surface for pastry. This is a handy way to get a light, even coating of flour.

—Maureen Valentine,
SeaTac, WA

Seasoning Cast Iron

I found an easy way to season my cast-iron cookware in my gas oven. After coating the pan with a thin layer of oil, I put it in the lower broiler section of my oven. Since the broiler heats up whenever I use the oven, my cast-iron cook-

ware is seasoned as I do my regular baking. I reseason my pans a couple of times a year as they need it. For new pans, I repeat the oiling process three or four times until I have a well-seasoned pan.

—Cynthia A. Jaworski,
Chicago, IL

Plastic Pastry Bag

In my work as a caterer, I often prepare batters such as choux paste ahead of time, carry them to the job, and then pipe them out and bake them on site. Instead of using a messy pastry bag (which always seem to get lost), I put the batter in resealable plastic food bags. I simply snip off the corner of the bag with scissors and pipe the batter directly from the plastic bag. If I need the batter to come out in a particular shape, I don't fill it ahead of time. I snip the bag and slip a piping tube into it before I fill it.

—Lawson St. John,
East Norwalk, CT

Crease-Free Tablecloths

Instead of keeping my tablecloths folded and stored on a shelf, I drape them on a large clothes hanger and hang them in the closet. There are fewer creases this way, so they look good even if I don't iron them—and I get to spend more time working on the meal.

—Kelly Danek,
Westminster, CA

No-Tears Peeling

I've found that if I hold an onion under cold running water while peeling off the skin, my eyes don't burn and tear up.

—Natalie Sztern,
Montreal, PQ

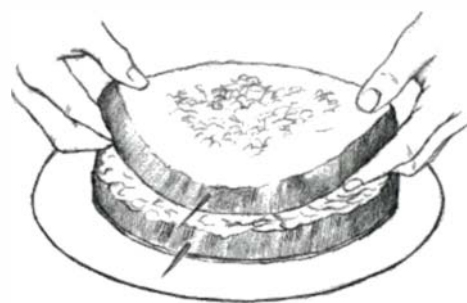
Skip the Grease

I have found that there's no need to grease the bowl before putting bread dough in to rise. If the dough is well kneaded, you can pull it away from the sides of the bowl easily without the messy butter or oil.

—David Auerbach,
Durham, NC

Aligning Cake Layers

I like to cut a single cake layer into two layers and fill in between them before icing the entire cake. Here's a simple method for realigning the cut layers so that the cake ends up level. Before I cut, I insert one toothpick horizontally into the side of the cake near the top, and insert another one near the bottom, directly underneath the first one. I cut the cake into two layers, spread on the filling, then set the top back on, re-



aligning the toothpicks. This method ensures a level cake, yet it doesn't require a perfectly level cut.

—Betsy Schwartz,
Greenwich, CT

Save the Artichoke Stem

The next time you cook fresh artichokes, don't toss out the stems. Peel them down to the pale core and cook them in boiling water along with the artichokes. They're as tender and tasty as the hearts.

—Linda Haines,
Las Vegas, NV

Keeping Food Fresh

When covering a container of food to store in the refrigerator, put plastic wrap right on the surface of the food itself, pushing out as much air as possible. Then put on any additional cover. If you do this instead of stretching the plastic wrap over the top of the container, the food will stay fresh longer. Test the idea with cottage cheese—you'll be surprised how much longer it keeps this way.

—Ken Erikson,
Grass Valley, CA ♦



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White Chocolate Mousse

1 package (6 squares)
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1 1/2 cups whipping
cream, divided

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MICROWAVE white chocolate and 1/4 cup of the cream in large micro-waveable bowl on HIGH 2 minutes or until white chocolate is almost melted, stirring halfway through heating time. Stir until white chocolate is completely melted. Cool 20 minutes or until room temperature, stirring occasionally.

BEAT remaining 1 1/4 cups cream in chilled medium bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form. DO NOT OVERBEAT. Fold 1/2 of the whipped cream into white chocolate mixture. Fold in remaining whipped cream just until blended. Spoon into dessert dishes.

REFRIGERATE 2 hours or until ready to serve. Garnish as desired. Makes 6 (1/2-cup) servings.



Spring Spa Menu

Four-course meal is full of flavor
but low in fat

BY AMY COTLER

MENU

Artichokes
Braised with
Whole Garlic
Cloves



Fennel
Risotto with
Shrimp



Arugula &
Aromatic
Orange Salad



Chocolate-
Cinnamon
Sherbet

When I began cooking spa cuisine professionally in the 1980s, I simply wanted to cook for my customers the food that I like to eat myself. I knew how to make *beurre blanc*, beef tenderloin, and chocolate truffle cake, but I preferred food that was still extremely flavorful but not too rich. I wanted my customers to walk away from a meal feeling satisfied but not overly full. Years later, still cooking and now teaching spa cuisine, I've found that more and more people want food that's delicious yet healthful.

WHY IS SPA COOKING DIFFERENT?

When I was taught classic Western cooking, nutrition simply wasn't an issue. In contrast, the spa chef considers nutrition within the context of fine cooking. This shifts the emphasis away from cooking large portions of meat, poultry, and fish in lots of fat, towards a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and carbohydrates. Some dishes are prepared exactly as they might be in a traditional kitchen, while others must be turned upside down to lower their fat content.

Why is lowering the fat so difficult for a cook? The savory smell of frying bacon tells you why. Fat has allure—we love it. It makes us feel satisfied with its heavy richness. Most important, fat has lots of flavor.

Certainly, anyone who's ever eaten a low-fat diet knows the wide role fat plays in our meals. It moistens sandwiches (mayonnaise), gives a tender richness to meats (animal fat), thickens and adds depth to sauces (cream and butter); coats vegetables with a glistening sheath of flavor (olive oil or butter); and it adds richness, texture, and great "mouth-feel" to desserts (butter, sour cream, cream). Unfortunately, that's just the beginning. How do we brown the food we sauté, crisp our potatoes, or dress our salads without lots of delicious fat?

Fortunately, there are many ways to do this, some of which I'll explore in the recipes for our spring spa menu. But one thing is true for all spa food—it demands more seasoning. Spa food can often be bland because the diner is missing something—fat. That missed flavor must be replaced through skillful seasoning. Healthy or not, flavor is the bottom line in cooking, and the finished dish must be delicious.

DESIGNING A SEASONAL SPA MENU

When I begin to compose any seasonal menu, I choose the basic ingredients according to what's fresh. Using these seasonal ingredients, I try to create menus by simply reversing our old ideas of the perfect meal. The traditional large portion of protein with just a little vegetable and starch garnish becomes a meal featuring carbohydrates, vegetables, and fruit with a little protein. For this meal, rice serves as the central dish, flanked by an artichoke appetizer and a refreshing salad of oranges and greens. The finale is a rich-tasting chocolate sherbet, just to prove that a decadent dessert need not be forsaken in spa dining. The menu gets less than 15% of its calories from fat, is comparatively low in calories (approximately 650), but still satisfies. Some recipes have a higher percentage of fat (the salad), some lower (the artichokes), but it is the average that matters in any diet (see the nutritional information chart on p. 93).

THE MEAL OPENS WITH ARTICHOKE

Artichokes are the perfect spa vegetable because they take plenty of time to eat and enjoy, and savoring our food slowly fills us up. But artichokes are often paired with lots of fat, with their leaves dipped

Savor the artichoke course petal by petal. The garlic-, herb-, and lemon-flavored liquid which the artichokes were cooked in makes a delicious sauce for dipping the leaves.





Let starch be the star.

Warm and creamy-tasting risotto is topped with a few marinated shrimp for a hearty main dish.



Take a little off the top and bottom. Slice off the leaves' spiny tops (above), cut off the stems and tough bottom leaves, and cook the artichokes with the garlic (right).

in butter or drenched in a vinaigrette. Luckily, artichokes also love lemon and garlic.

For this dish, the whole artichoke is simmered in herbs, lemon juice, and whole peeled garlic cloves. The acidity of the lemon cuts the earthiness of the artichoke, and the herbs further infuse it with flavor. But the *pièce de résistance* is the garlic. It's added during the last part of the cooking and served in the center of



What is spa cuisine?

Spa cuisine isn't about deprivation, it's about balance. People may change their eating habits for weight or health concerns, but food isn't medicine. If it doesn't taste good, why bother? Whether this kind of food is called "spa cuisine," "light cooking," or "a healthy diet," it isn't about banned foods, bland foods, or even perfect body weight. At its best, spa cuisine is delicious food that is simply good for you.

The term "spa cuisine" was coined by an advertising team for the menu developed in the early 1980s by chef Seppi Renggli and a nutritionist at the Four Seasons restaurant in New York City. Their aim was to create balanced menus with a boosted nutrient-to-calorie ratio that remained tasty and attractive. The menus were and continue to be a smash success.

In the "spa" kitchen, there is no single philosophy. Some chefs may prepare organic vegetarian foods, eliminate dairy, or invent dishes with unusually nutritious foods like quinoa and hiziki. "Low-fat" cookbook authors often reinterpret traditional international dishes for their health-conscious readers. Culinary educators teach their students spa cooking techniques to enable them to tailor a healthier diet to their harried lifestyles. These food professionals may define the specifics of spa cooking differently, but they all share an interest in food and health.

the open artichoke flower as an accompanying vegetable. To eat, the artichoke leaves are pulled off and swished in the cooking liquid. Then the garlic-filled bottom is eaten with plenty of whole-grain bread.

RISOTTO SUCCEEDS AS A SATISFYING MAIN DISH

The main dish features a carbohydrate as its centerpiece. Years ago, while I was working in a restaurant near a famous health spa, I cooked loads of garlic mashed potatoes for "spa refugees," as we called them. These runaways came to the restaurant to escape their low-fat diets because they simply weren't full. Like those mashed potatoes, risotto satisfies by giving diners the "heavy" feeling they're looking for in a main course.

The key to a good risotto is its texture. Made with arborio rice, the kernels must remain distinct, *al dente*, and yet bound together by a heavenly sauce that's generated from the starch in the rice. The best risotto is made with *superfino* (top-quality) arborio rice, grown in northern Italy, but in a pinch you can use another short-grain rice, as long as it isn't sticky rice. The right texture is attained by adding stock to

the rice in small increments, cooking and stirring until each addition is completely absorbed. Most of us want to be with our guests, not standing by the stove stirring for 25 minutes. So for this recipe, the risotto is partially cooked ahead and then finished right before serving, a common restaurant technique for cooking risotto to order.

Traditionally, risotto starts with a *soffrito*, which is often a combination of oil, butter, and onions. I eliminated the butter, cut down on the olive oil, and exchanged onions for a larger amount of shallots to add flavor without overwhelming the dish. A good dose of fennel is added at this early stage to lend a deep and subtle anise flavor. Next the rice is added and stirred until it is just evenly coated. Often wine is added at this stage, but I used white vermouth, simply because I like the taste and it keeps easily in the home kitchen. Vermouth is aromatic, so again that boosts the flavor further. Finally, a tasty homemade stock is essential to this risotto, because it doesn't fall back on the flavor of butter or cheese like most risottos.

AROMATIC SALAD GIVES A BURST OF FLAVOR

A salad of contrasting sweet aromatic oranges and bitter greens refreshes the palate after the creamy risotto. Salads are often a hidden source of fat. They appear light and low-calorie, but the dressing can be insidiously fatty. People on low-fat diets often ask for dressing on the side, but I find this totally unsatisfying. The greens get nothing or they get drenched by pouring on dressing at the table. There are other solutions.

One technique is to prepare your dressing right on the salad so that you can toss the greens well in a very small amount of dressing. For four to six people, a tablespoon of oil will coat all your greens lightly. Toss the greens well with the oil and a little kosher salt, and then add a tiny splash of vinegar and toss again.

A second approach is to make a classic vinaigrette, but to cut down on the conventional proportions of oil to vinegar, which are three or four parts oil to one part vinegar. To get the most mileage out of the oil you do use, choose a strong, fruity olive oil. For the arugula and orange salad in this menu, I combined both techniques, making the dressing right on the salad and using a little fresh juice from the sectioned oranges to cut the proportion of oil in the dressing. The aromatic spices further boost the flavor, contrasting nicely with the sweet oranges.

RICH-TASTING CHOCOLATE DESSERT FINISHES THE MEAL

The chocolate sherbet is an exercise in spa decadence. Because fruit was used in our salad course, chocolate seemed the obvious choice for dessert. Sherbet can be made ahead with little effort, so it's



good for parties. My challenge? I wanted a rich and satisfying chocolate flavor without the fat of pure chocolate. Sorbets can be lightened by adding whipped egg whites into the partially frozen dessert, but I didn't want to lighten up the texture. I wanted a dessert heavy in mouth-feel but not heavy in the stomach. A top-quality cocoa powder solved part of the problem by adding deep flavor without much fat. The taste is further enhanced with cinnamon, grated nutmeg, lots of vanilla, and a touch of—surprise—freshly ground black pepper. The first results were extremely tasty but a tiny bit icy. By replacing some of the water with evaporated skim milk, the taste was a little richer, and the sherbet now stayed smoother. A fan of banana slices or a ginger snap add a quick flourish.

Spiced oranges and bitter arugula refresh the palate. To evenly coat the salad with the vinaigrette, fruity olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and orange juice are tossed with the arugula, endive, and oranges just before serving.

Preparing the spa meal:

UP TO TWO DAYS AHEAD:

- ◆ Make the sherbet and store it in a covered container in the freezer.

THE DAY BEFORE THE DINNER OR EARLY THAT DAY:

- ◆ Trim the artichokes and keep them refrigerated in a bowl of cold water and lemon juice. Peel the garlic and chop the parsley.
- ◆ Mince the shallots for the risotto. Dice the fennel bulb and it store in cold water and lemon juice. Peel and devein the shrimp. If you don't have homemade stock on hand, now is the time to make it.
- ◆ Wash and dry the salad greens. Section the oranges and store them in their juice. Grind and sieve the spices.

A FEW HOURS BEFORE DINNER:

- ◆ Cook the artichokes and remove the chokes from the center of each one.
- ◆ Cook the risotto three-quarters of the way and spread it on a baking sheet.

ONE HOUR BEFORE THE DINNER:

- ◆ Plate the artichokes.
- ◆ Marinate the shrimp.
- ◆ Chill the sherbet bowls.

DURING THE DINNER:

- ◆ Heat the risotto bowls and finish cooking the risotto.
- ◆ Assemble the salad.



Do-ahead risotto. A few hours before serving, cook the risotto $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way.



Cool the partially cooked risotto by spreading it on a baking sheet.



Finish cooking the risotto with any last-minute additions and serve.

ARTICHOKES BRAISED WITH WHOLE GARLIC CLOVES

Because there's no rich sauce to mask their flavor, the artichokes for this recipe must be especially fresh. Look for tight heads without any hint of brown. The dish can be served warm or at room temperature. To serve warm, hold the artichokes in a 200°F oven in their cooking liquid for up to an hour before the dinner. Serve with plenty of whole-grain bread. *Serves six.*

6 artichokes
1½ to 2 lemons
2 heads garlic
Kosher salt
½ tsp. minced fresh thyme leaves (or ⅛ tsp. dried)
½ tsp. minced fresh rosemary leaves (or ⅛ tsp. dried)
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 Tbs. chopped parsley

With a sharp knife, cut off the top inch of the artichoke, parallel to the base (see photo on p. 24). Use scissors to cut off the prickly tips of the remaining leaves. Cut off the stem of each artichoke. Pull off the bottom row of leaves and trim around the base with a knife. Put the trimmed artichokes in a bowl of cold water with the juice of ½ lemon until ready to cook.

Cut a thin slice from one end of each garlic head to expose the flesh of the garlic cloves. Then break the head into cloves with your hands, discarding any extra papery skins. Drop the cloves into boiling water for 20 seconds and then drain. When the cloves are cool enough to handle, remove the skins with your fingers.

Prepare the cooking liquid in a pot just large enough to contain the trimmed artichokes in one layer (or use two pots). Fill it with 1 in. of water, the juice of 1 lemon, a generous pinch of salt, the thyme, rosemary, and pepper. Bring the liquid to a boil and then turn it down to a simmer.

Put the artichokes, stem side up, in the pot. Cover the pot so that no steam escapes while the artichokes cook. Cook at a slow simmer for 20 min. and then drop the peeled garlic cloves into the liquid, distributing them evenly among the artichokes. Cover the pot again and steam for an additional 10 to 20 min., or until a bottom leaf can be pulled off easily and the meat is soft and fleshy when you scrape the leaf between your teeth. You can further test the artichoke by inserting a skewer or the tip of a sharp knife into the base; it should penetrate easily.

Transfer the artichokes to a plate. When they're cool enough to handle, gently spread the leaves open, like a blooming flower, just enough to get into the center to remove the choke. Reach inside with your hand and twist off the cone of small purplish leaves covering the center choke. Using a teaspoon, gently scrape the hairy choke off the bottom. Be sure to remove all of it.

Swish the bottom of one leaf in the cooking liquid and taste. Adjust the seasonings if necessary. The liquid may need the juice of ½ lemon, a pinch of salt, and a generous grind of pepper. Empty the liquid into a measuring cup and pour a few tablespoons onto each plate. Put an artichoke in the center of each plate, spreading the leaves gently apart like a flower. Distribute the garlic cloves evenly into the centers of the artichokes. Sprinkle both the artichokes and the cooking liquid with parsley.

FENNEL RISOTTO WITH SHRIMP

This risotto is partially cooked ahead of time and then finished right before serving. If this is your first time making risotto, you may want to try cooking it to completion once so that you get a feel for when to stop and hold it. *Serves six.*

FOR THE SHRIMP MARINADE:

18 medium shrimp ($\frac{3}{4}$ pound), peeled and deveined
1 tsp. fennel seeds, lightly toasted and ground
Juice of ½ lemon
1 clove garlic, minced
Cayenne to taste

FOR THE RISOTTO:

About 5 cups homemade chicken, fish, or vegetable stock
⅔ cup minced shallots
2 Tbs. fruity olive oil
1½ cups diced fennel bulb
1½ cups uncooked arborio rice
½ cup dry vermouth
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Fennel sprigs for garnish

Toss the shrimp together with the marinade ingredients and marinate for up to one hour. (The shrimp will get mushy from the acidic lemon juice if marinated too long.)

Bring the stock to a simmer. Adjust the seasonings if necessary; it should be tasty.

In a medium nonstick sauté pan, sauté the shallots in the oil over medium heat until they're translucent, about 5 min. Add the diced fennel and the rice and stir to coat with oil. Add the vermouth and garlic, stirring occasionally until all the liquid is evaporated.

Pour the warm stock over the rice $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time, stirring periodically with a flat-ended wooden spoon until all the stock is absorbed before each addition. Scrape the spoon along the bottom of the pot to prevent the rice from sticking and to see if the stock has been absorbed. Keep the temperature at a lively simmer, not a rapid boil. If the heat is too high, the rice will be soft on the outside but hard on the inside.

When the risotto is three-quarters cooked (you will have added 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups of stock), let the last addition of liquid be completely absorbed and turn off the heat. Taste and season the risotto. Spread the risotto in a thin layer on a baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and leave at room temperature. This can be done up to 2 hours ahead.

When you're ready to serve the dish, divide the risotto and the marinated shrimp between two nonstick pans. (If you put all the rice in just one pan, it will be overdone by the time the shrimp is cooked.) Add 2 Tbs. hot stock to each pan. Stir for a few minutes over medium-low heat until the liquid is absorbed and then add another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup stock to each pan. Keep adding stock in $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup increments, stirring constantly until the shrimp is just done and the rice is *al dente* but not chalky in the center. Risotto tends to tighten up a bit once it's finished, so swirl in a bit more stock at the end. The final texture should be like a very thick soup or stew. Taste for seasoning, transfer to warmed bowls, garnish with fennel sprigs, and serve immediately.

ARUGULA & AROMATIC ORANGE SALAD

Peel and section the oranges and then store them in their juice until you're ready to serve the salad. Use some of the juice to flavor the vinaigrette. *Serves six.*

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried green peppercorns

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. coriander seeds

3 navel oranges, peeled and cut into sections, juice reserved

2 bunches of arugula (a scant handful of stemmed leaves for each person)

2 bulbs endive, bottoms trimmed off, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. slices

1 Tbs. fruity olive oil

Kosher salt to taste

1 Tbs. good-quality balsamic vinegar

In a spice grinder or a mortar and pestle, finely grind the peppercorns and coriander seeds together. Pass the spices through a fine sieve to remove any husks. Drain the orange sections (reserving the juice) and toss them with the ground spices.

When you're ready to serve the salad, toss the arugula and endive with the olive oil and salt. In a small bowl, combine the vinegar and 1 Tbs. orange juice. Pour this onto the greens and toss again. Center the greens on six salad plates and top with the aromatic oranges. Serve immediately.

CHOCOLATE-CINNAMON SHERBET

Although it's extremely low in fat, this sherbet has a deep, chocolate taste. If you're used to making ice cream, be patient: low-fat sherbets take longer to freeze than richer frozen desserts. An ice-cream maker is handy but not essential. *Serves six.*



$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 Tbs. unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa powder

1 cup sugar

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

1 cup water

1 can (12 oz.) evaporated skim milk

1 Tbs. vanilla extract

In a small saucepan, mix the cocoa powder, sugar, cinnamon, pepper, and nutmeg. Whisk in the water and bring to a boil, continuing to whisk to break up lumps and prevent burning. Turn down the heat and simmer for 2 to 3 min., until the sugar is completely dissolved, leaving the whisk in the pan to prevent a boil-over. Off the heat, add the evaporated skim milk and the vanilla extract and let the mixture cool.

In an ice-cream maker—When the mixture is room temperature, put it in an ice-cream maker and follow the manufacturer's directions. The sherbet may take as long as 40 min. to freeze to "soft-serve" texture or a little softer. Transfer to a container with a cover and freeze longer for a firmer texture.

In a large dish—If you don't have an ice-cream maker, the sherbet can be frozen in a large, nonreactive baking container, like a glass lasagna dish. The texture of the sherbet done in this manner is a little icier—closer to a granita.

Pour the room-temperature mixture into the dish and put it in the freezer. When it starts to chill, stir at least once an hour until it has the texture of very soft ice cream. The length of time it takes to complete depends on how cold your freezer is.

Serve in small chilled bowls or martini glasses.

Spa meals have dessert, too. This rich-tasting chocolate-cinnamon sherbet is made with cocoa powder, which gives it a deep chocolate taste without a lot of fat.

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Delicious Danish

Time-consuming to make, and worth every moment

BY JUDITH FERTIG



Bakery-perfect pastries that taste better than anything you could buy. You'll know it was well worth the effort to make homemade Danishes when you sit down to savor one of these soft, flaky sweets with a cup of hot coffee.

T rue Danish pastry is almost indescribably good. Buttery and yeasty, soft and flaky, traditional Danish pastry can take on a delightful variety of shapes and fillings, but there's no getting around the fact that it takes a long time to make. When I travelled through Copenhagen, I found that there are hundreds of excellent bakeries, and so the Danes rarely consider making their own pastry. But few areas of America are so fortunate, which means if you want good Danish, you must make it yourself. While it's a project, don't let that daunt you; real

Danish pastry tastes nothing like the pallid "Danishes" you've known. Once you taste the results of your work, you'll know it was worth all the effort.

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A DANISH

Making Danish pastries is an ideal weekend project. One day is devoted to mixing and chilling the dough, rolling the butter layer, and folding and combining—or "turning"—the butter and dough layers. This is also a good day to make the almond filling, which tastes best when it has at least a day to

Photo this page: Eleanor Thompson

ripen. The dough chills, and continues to rise, overnight. On the second day, you roll, cut, shape, and—finally—bake the dough.

With this kind of time investment, it's smart to make a large batch, eat some, and freeze the rest. Just seal the cooled pastries in plastic wrap and put them in the freezer. Frozen Danish pastry will keep about three months. When you warm them in a 375°F oven, the frozen pastries will regain much of their fresh-baked flavor.

SHORTCUTS THAT DO AND DON'T WORK

If you devote hours to one recipe, it only makes sense to use the best ingredients. Unsalted butter is vital, as is high-quality vanilla extract. Almond filling, or marzipan, is available in a can, but the home-made variety is infinitely better. When you make the almond filling, blanch your own fresh almonds rather than buying blanched nuts, which can be stale. Make sure your yeast is fresh and within the expiration date.

For accuracy, bakers measure their flour by weight, not volume. Weighing the flour gives a truer measure and a more foolproof batch of pastries. I use a small kitchen scale that's available in most grocery stores.

Some shortcuts are useful. For no-fuss fillings, use good-quality jams or preserves. Homemade fillings can be made the night before; almond filling tastes best when it's made at least a day in advance. The dough also can be made a day ahead, folded, rolled, covered, and refrigerated before cutting and baking. The real time-saver comes when you take baked pastries out of the freezer on a winter morning.

GETTING STARTED: MAKING THE DOUGH

My recipe calls for using a mixer with a dough-hook attachment, but your pastries will be equally good if you make the dough by hand. Of course, it will take longer, but the soft dough is fun to feel. Also, despite its somewhat loose consistency, the dough is surprisingly cooperative and responsive. Nevertheless, stickiness is not unusual. If it becomes temperamental, liberally toss flour over and under the dough as you work.

If at all possible, make Danish pastry on a cool, dry day—or, if it's humid and hot, work in a thoroughly air-conditioned kitchen. While such a climate will keep you comfortable, it's more for the pastry dough's benefit than your own. With its large quantity of butter, the dough gets soft quickly. If the butter actually begins to melt, the layer structure will deteriorate, and the pastries will be greasy and less flaky. If the dough becomes difficult to handle, put it in the refrigerator for 15 minutes. This will help you maintain your patience as well as prevent the butter from melting, which would create a greasy texture.



A solid whack puts butter in its place. To make the butter layer, put the butter between two sheets of kitchen parchment (above) and use the length of a rolling pin to pound them flat. After flattening the butter in one direction, give the paper a quarter turn and pound the butter again. Continue in this fashion until the butter forms a rectangle about 10x8 inches.

DANISH PASTRY DOUGH

This recipe makes enough dough to create a variety of shapes, and it's easily doubled. Yields approximately 3½ pounds of dough.

2 packages (½ oz.) active dry yeast
½ cup warm (110°F) water
½ cup sugar
1 cup milk
2 large eggs, beaten
1 lb. plus 6 oz. flour (about 5¼ cups); more for dusting and rolling
¾ tsp. salt
¾ lb. (3 sticks) unsalted butter

Make the dough. Sprinkle the yeast over the water. Stir in 1 tsp. of the sugar. Leave the yeast mixture in a warm place to proof for about 5 min. The yeast will bubble and foam. If it doesn't, the yeast is inactive; throw it out and start over.

In a large bowl, combine the yeast mixture with the rest of the sugar, the milk, eggs, 1 lb. of the flour (about 4 cups), and salt. Beat with an electric mixer, using the dough-hook attachment, on medium speed for about 3 min. Scrape down sides to incorporate the flour. (Alternatively, beat with a wooden spoon until the flour is well incorporated.) Gradually add the remaining flour. Turn mixer to medium-high and knead about 5 min., or until the dough is shiny and elastic. (Alternatively, turn the dough onto a well-floured surface and knead about 10 min.) Put the dough in a bowl, drape a piece of oiled plastic wrap directly on the dough, and refrigerate for 30 min. so the dough can chill and rise slightly.

Make the butter layer. Arrange the butter sticks a few inches apart from each other on a sheet of waxed paper or kitchen parchment. With a pencil, measure and trace a 10x12-in. rectangle on another sheet of waxed paper. Drape

Roll the butter flat. After the butter has been pounded into shape, use the rolling pin to smooth it out (above left). Here, the author has drawn a rectangle on the top sheet of parchment as a guide. She'll use a straightedge to nudge the butter so that it matches the rectangle's outline.

This dough has been “turned.” A “turn” is each time the dough is rolled and folded into thirds, like a business letter. Turning builds layers of butter and dough. Baking makes the butter produce steam, which separates the dough layers and forces them to rise. This dough will be turned four times.



When making a tea ring, don't slice all the way through. Roll the dough jellyroll style and shape it into a circle. Use a sharp knife to cut the dough circle into 1 1/4-inch sections. To form the tea ring, turn the sections on their sides, forming pinwheels that are connected by the ring's inner edge.

this sheet on top of the butter and bang on the butter with a rolling pin to flatten, turning the paper as necessary to even out the butter (see the photos on p. 29). If the butter becomes too soft, dust it lightly with flour. Roll the butter into a 10x12-in. rectangle, about 1/4 in. thick, using the marked paper as a guide. (The butter will have rough edges that exceed the rectangle; you can ignore these or scoot them into place with the edge of a ruler.) Remove the top sheet and cut the butter in half to create two 6x10-in. rectangles. Replace the top sheet of waxed paper and refrigerate the butter while you roll the dough.

Rolling and turning the dough. Punch down the dough and turn it out on a well-floured surface. Roll it into an 18x13-in. rectangle and dust this with flour. The rectangle should be vertical, facing you. Peel off the top sheet of waxed paper from the butter, hold one butter rectangle in place with the paper, and flip the other half onto the third of the dough closest to you. Fold this third of the dough upward. Lay the other butter rectangle on top of the first butter-and-dough layer. Fold the last third of dough on top of the butter. You should have 6x13-in. rectangle. Slide the dough onto a floured baking sheet and refrigerate for 15 min.

Position the chilled dough so that the fold is to your left and the dough can be opened like a book. Roll the dough into a 12x24-in. rectangle, dusting it with flour to keep it from sticking. Fold it in thirds again; you have just “turned” the dough. Refrigerate for 15 min., and then repeat the turn (rolling and folding) two more times. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

CUTTING AND FILLING

Below are instructions for four pastry shapes. All these pastries should be baked in an oven heated to 400°F.

Remove the chilled pastry rectangle from the refrigerator and cut it into quarters. Work with only a quarter at a time; keep the remaining dough in the refrigerator. Each shaping instruction is designed for a quarter of the basic dough recipe.

Tea ring—Roll one-quarter of the basic dough recipe into a 10x16-in. rectangle. Spread the dough evenly with 1/3 cup of cream-cheese filling (see recipe at right). Starting with a long side, roll up the dough jellyroll style. Connect both ends of the roll to form a 7-in. circle, pinching the dough to seal. Transfer the circle to a greased or parchment-lined baking sheet. Make about 12 deep cuts into—but not through—the dough, approximately 1 1/4 in. apart, leaving the dough connected at the inner edge of the circle. Turn the slices on their sides (see photo at left) and let the ring rise for 30 to 40 min. With a floured thumb, make an indentation in the center of each spiral. Brush the ring with egg wash (see recipe at right) and spread 1 tsp. jam in each indentation. Bake for 25 min., or until browned. Cool 5 min., transfer to a rack, and drizzle with icing (see recipe at right).

Crescents—Roll one-quarter of the basic dough recipe into a 6x15-in. rectangle. Using a zigzag pattern, cut the dough into five triangles with 6-in. sides and a 3-in. base. Mound the filling (2 tsp. jam, 1 Tbs. cream-cheese filling, or 2 tsp. almond filling) about 1 in. from each triangle's base. Starting at the base, roll up each triangle. Arrange each roll on a baking sheet with the triangle's tip tucked under and bend the roll to form a crescent. Let rise 20 to 30 min. Brush with egg wash and bake for 20 to 25 min. Cool for 5 min., transfer to a rack, and drizzle with icing.

Bear claws—Roll one-quarter of the basic dough recipe into an 8x16-in. rectangle. Cut the dough into eight 4-in. squares. Spread 1 Tbs. of cream-cheese filling, almond filling, or jam in the middle of the square, leaving a 1/2-in. bor-



Three cuts make a bear claw. Mound the filling across the center of a dough square, fold the square in half, and cut through the edge with the filling at 1-inch intervals. When you brush the claw with egg wash, don't forget to get in between the “toes”; this helps prevent the filling from oozing out.



A drizzle of white icing is the final touch. The icing makes the pastries look even more tempting, but it's the soft, flaky pastry and the rich fillings that make them impossible to resist.

der all around. Brush one side with egg wash, fold it over, and make three cuts in the filling side, but not all the way to the seam side. Arrange the "claws" on a baking sheet and fan out the "toes" slightly. Let rise 20 to 25 min. Brush with egg wash and bake 20 to 25 min. Cool for 5 min., transfer to a rack, and drizzle with icing.

Pinwheels—Roll one-quarter of the basic dough recipe into a 10x16-in. rectangle. Spread evenly with one of the following:

- ♦ 3 Tbs. melted butter, followed by a mixture of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and 2 tsp. cinnamon
- ♦ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream-cheese filling
- ♦ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup jam
- ♦ 1 cup almond filling, rolled out to a 10x16-in. rectangle between two layers of kitchen parchment

Roll up the dough jellyroll style, starting with a long side. With the roll seam side down, cut it into 1-in. rounds. Put the rounds on a baking sheet and let rise 20 to 30 min. Brush with egg wash and bake 20 to 25 min. Cool for 5 min., transfer to a rack, and drizzle with icing.

ALMOND FILLING

Scandinavians love vanilla-flavored almond filling. If you want a stronger almond flavor, substitute almond extract for the vanilla extract. *Yields $\frac{1}{3}$ cups.*

8 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cups) whole almonds
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 large egg white

Heat the oven to 300°F.

To blanch the almonds, put them in a bowl and pour boiling water over them to loosen the skins. Let the almonds stand in the water for about 3 min. Drain the water and peel off the skins with your fingers. If the skins are resistant, let the almonds soak a few minutes longer and try again.

To toast the blanched almonds, spread them on a baking sheet and put them in the oven for about 15 min., or until golden. Don't let them go from golden to dark brown; if they do, throw them out and start over.

To make the filling, put the cooled almonds into the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade and grind them fine. Add the sugar and process until the mixture feels like coarse flour. Add the vanilla extract and the egg white and process again until the mixture becomes a stiff paste, about 3 min.

This almond filling tastes best if matured two days before using, but it can be used right away. Sealed in plastic wrap, it will keep for several months in the refrigerator.

CREAM-CHEESE FILLING

This favorite filling is extremely easy to make. *Yields $\frac{1}{3}$ cups.*

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 large egg yolk
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 Tbs. flour

Blend all the ingredients together. This filling will keep for two days in the refrigerator.

EGG WASH

Brush this egg wash on your pastries just before baking for a golden finish.

1 egg
2 Tbs. water

Lightly beat the egg with a fork or a small whisk, add the water, and whisk together.

WHITE ICING

Drizzle warm pastries with this thin icing for a sweet finale. *Yields $\frac{1}{3}$ cups.*

$\frac{1}{2}$ cups confectioners' sugar
1 large egg white

Pour the sugar in a bowl and add the egg white. Mix with a wooden spoon until it becomes a smooth, glossy paste.

YOU CAN'T BUY DANISH PASTRY IN DENMARK

We give these flaky pastries a Danish name, but to buy one in Copenhagen, you'll have to ask for weinerbrod, or "Viennese bread." The name helps to explain the pastry's origins, which stem from a war and a labor strike.

In 1815, the Congress of Vienna met to stabilize Europe after the fall of Napoleon. Denmark's rulers were among the guests at the Austrian emperor's lavish banquets, and the Danes were greatly impressed by the talented Viennese bakers.

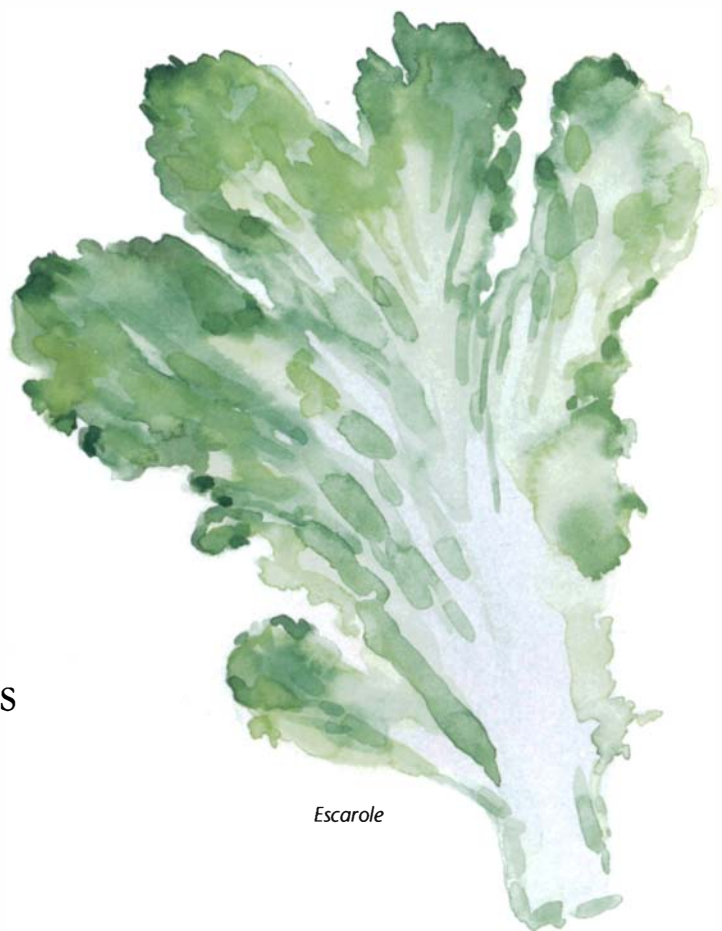
The wonderful pastries of Vienna might have remained only in Danish memory, but Copenhagen's bakers went on strike in the mid-1800s. This crisis became opportunity, as Danish bakery owners "imported" Viennese and German bakers as replacements. When the strike ended, the reinstated Danish bakers learned the pastry secrets of the Viennese bakers, and the rest is gastro-nomic history.—J.F.

Judith Fertig makes Danish pastries and writes about food from her home in Overland Park, Kansas. ♦

Great Greens

Familiar or exotic, these leafy vegetables aren't just for salads

BY STEVEN PETUSEVSKY



Escarole



Greens aren't just for side dishes. Savoy spinach makes a flavorful foundation for these seared scallops.

When you hear the phrase “cooked greens,” do you think “cooked to death”? Do you envision a big pot of greens boiled with bacon, fat-back, or ham hocks until the texture is mushy and the nutritional value long-gone? Not if I've ever cooked for you. Prepared the way I like them—briefly steamed or sautéed with fresh seasonings—cooked greens are perfect for people who want quick, delicious, and healthy dishes.

As executive chef of the largest natural-foods restaurant in the country, I serve 500 to 600 pounds of greens each week. I've learned that their earthy yet adaptable flavors make them one of the most versatile groups of vegetables around.

SELECT FIRM LEAVES AND WATCH FOR BUGS

When buying greens, look for whole, fully formed leaves that are crisp and shiny. Beware of small holes and dark blemishes that usually indicate that insects have been at work. Because greens are delicate and perishable, it will be obvious when they're past their peak of freshness. Leaves should never be limp, discolored, or brown. Always check the cut stem for rusty, brown, or slimy ends that mean the greens have been sitting too long. I find produce departments that regularly mist their greens with water offer the best products. But watch for greens that have become waterlogged from overmisting: they should be dried with paper towels before you store them in your refrigerator.

USE 'EM OR LOSE 'EM

I recommend using fresh greens within three days of purchase. Refrigerate the greens in perforated plastic bags, which you can make by punching small holes in ordinary produce bags with a large fork.

Before you cook greens, trim away tough stem ends, discard tough or discolored leaves, and wash them well. Although the package may say they don't need washing, I still give them a good rinse, but they must be handled gently. Fill a large bowl or a clean sink with cold water. Submerge the greens briefly, shake them gently to release any clinging dirt, and drain them in a colander. If they're particularly gritty, I repeat this process several times. It's tempting to soak the greens, but resist the urge: they'll lose valuable vitamins that way. It isn't necessary to dry the greens before sautéing, steaming, or braising them. In fact, the water left on the leaves aids their cooking: the water and oil combine to steam and sauté simultaneously.

Cut tougher greens (chard, escarole, kale, collards, and broccoli raab) into bite-size pieces with a sharp knife. Smaller, more delicate leaves are best left whole.

GIVE GREENS THE LIGHT TOUCH

Because greens have their own unique flavors, I think it's best to use them in simple recipes. In fact, greens are delicious when merely “water sautéed,” or cooked in the water left clinging to their leaves after washing. To do this, heat oil in a nonstick pan over moderate heat. Look for a light haze over the oil and then put in



the washed greens. Add seasonings (such as salt, pepper, or lemon juice) and stir the greens constantly until they begin to wilt. If you're trying to avoid added fat in your diet, this is a quick, easy cooking method.

The distinctive taste of greens pairs well with ethnic flavors. Add a sprinkling of chile powder, chopped cilantro, and a squeeze of lime juice for a southwestern flavor. Basil, mint leaves, and a little *nuoc mam* (fish sauce) provide an Asian accent. Sautéed in olive oil with some garlic, toasted pine nuts, lemon juice, and sun-dried tomatoes, your greens will take on a Tuscan character.

THE COMMON GREENS

While new varieties of greens are appearing all the time, don't overlook the more common varieties:

Kale—Also called Scotch kale or Savoy salad, kale is often used as a garnish. It resembles broccoli in flavor, but with a spicy, somewhat bitter finish.

Escarole—Often used raw in salads, escarole has loose green outer leaves and yellow leaves towards the center. Escarole has a slightly bitter taste and is a regular addition to Italian stews and soups.

Dandelion greens—Also called cow-parsnip, bright green dandelion leaves have a long, narrow shape with a toothed edge. They should be harvested before the plant flowers and can be eaten raw in salads or made into wine. They're wonderful in soups.

Broccoli raab—Also known as rabe and rapini, broccoli raab is a member of the turnip family and is

used in many Italian dishes. Its leafy green stalks are crunchy and its small florets are soft, almost creamy.

Collards—Another member of the kale family, collards are associated with traditional southern cooking. These large, flat, dark green leaves help ring in the New Year in many southern homes.

THE EXOTIC GREENS

Many of the new, interesting greens coming to market are of Asian pedigree, while others are contemporary varieties developed from long-favored domestic types.

Tat-soi—An Asian member of the kale family, tat-soi is worth seeking out, as only the young, tender leaves are harvested. The tiny rounded leaves are emerald green with very thin, white ribbing. It tastes like a delicate spinach with a lemony kick.

Mizuna—Relatively new to American markets, mizuna is also called Japanese mustard green and has a mild mustard flavor. The narrow, pointed leaves, pale to yellow green, are often incorporated into mesclun, a mix of baby salad greens.

Savoy spinach—The small, ruffled leaves of Savoy spinach appear to be a cross between spinach and Savoy cabbage, but the flavor is unlike any spinach I've had because of its spicy aftertaste. The leaves are dark green with almost no visible veins. It can be eaten raw in salads, but it's excellent lightly cooked.

Chard—Also called Swiss chard or beet greens, chard is actually a type of beet that's grown for its leaves rather than its roots. The broad, fan-shaped



Tat-soi



Mizuna

Mizuna is an equal partner with chicken in this quick and delicious wok-cooked dish.



leaves have a white rib running down the center. They vary from light to dark green. Red chard varieties have a bright red rib like rhubarb. Chard is an excellent substitute for spinach in sautés, soups, and stir-fries.

WOK-SAUTÉED MIZUNA & MINCED CHICKEN

I prefer serving the minced chicken with a bowl of steaming jasmine or basmati rice, but many of my customers enjoy it over angel hair pasta. Let your guests add a dash of hot chile oil if they like extra heat. *Serves four to six.*

1 egg white, lightly beaten
1 tsp. minced fresh ginger
1 tsp. minced garlic
1½ tsp. tamari or soy sauce
1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, minced
2 tsp. peanut or canola oil
⅓ cup minced carrots
⅓ cup minced onions
¼ cup minced water chestnuts
½ tsp. chile paste with garlic, such as Taste of Thai
Juice of 1 lime
1 lb. mizuna, ends trimmed
4 chopped scallions for decoration

Combine the egg white, ginger, garlic, and ½ tsp. tamari. Add the chicken and marinate for 1 hour in the refrigerator.

Heat 1 tsp. of the oil in a wok or sauté pan over high heat. Add the chicken and the marinade; cook 4 to 6 min., stirring constantly, until the chicken is cooked through. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.

Heat the remaining oil in the pan. Add the carrots, onions, and water chestnuts; sauté 2 to 3 min. Add the remaining tamari, chile paste, lime juice, and mizuna and stir frequently until the mizuna wilts slightly, about 1 min. Add the chicken and toss to combine. Decorate with the scallions and serve.

SCALLOPS WITH LIME & SAVOY SPINACH

This dish makes a wonderful appetizer and is nicely complemented with crisp, dry white wine, such as a Sauvignon Blanc or an Amontillado Sherry. If you prefer, you can use shrimp instead of scallops. *Serves four to six.*

FOR THE CARAMELIZED WALNUTS:

¼ cup shelled walnut pieces
1 tsp. sugar

FOR THE SEARED SCALLOPS:

Juice of 1 lime
1 tsp. chopped lime zest
2 tsp. olive or canola oil; more for the pan
2 tsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 tsp. minced shallots
Freshly ground black pepper
2 lb. sea scallops

FOR THE SAVOY SPINACH:

½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp. minced garlic
1½ lb. Savoy spinach leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

To make the caramelized walnuts—In a nonstick pan over medium heat, combine the nuts and sugar. Stir until the sugar melts, forms a syrup, and coats the nuts, about 2 min. Quickly transfer the nuts to a plate.

To make the seared scallops—In a nonreactive container, combine half the lime juice, the zest, oil, garlic, mustard, shallots, and pepper. Add the scallops and toss to coat; marinate for 1 hour in the refrigerator.

Heat a cast-iron pan over medium heat and brush it with a little oil. Remove the scallops from the marinade. Sear the scallops on one side, trying not to crowd them and without moving them, about 2 min.; this may have to be done in



batches. Turn and sear until browned on the other side, about 2 min.

When all the scallops are cooked, transfer them to a clean bowl. Return the pan to the stove and add the remaining lime juice to the pan to deglaze. With a wooden spoon, scrape the pan to remove any browned bits. Pour the pan juices over the scallops; set aside and keep warm.

To make the Savoy spinach—Rinse the pan and heat the olive oil in it over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cook until lightly browned. Add the Savoy spinach and cook briefly, stirring, until the leaves wilt. Season with salt and pepper.

To assemble—Make a nest of the Savoy spinach on each serving plate. Arrange a portion of the scallops with accumulated juices on the spinach; top with the walnuts.

GARLICKY GREENS WITH PENNE PASTA & SPICY TOMATO BROTH

This dish is a great meal by itself. Serve it with a softer red wine, like a California Merlot or Zinfandel. *Serves four to six.*

FOR THE TOMATO BROTH:

1 cup chopped onions
 1 cup chopped tomatoes
 ½ cup chopped celery
 ½ cup chopped carrots
 Vegetable trimmings (not cabbage, broccoli, or cauliflower), optional
 2 cups tomato juice
 Sprigs of fresh thyme, rosemary, basil, and oregano (or a pinch each of dried)
 2 fresh chile peppers, halved, or 1 tsp. hot red pepper flakes
 Salt (or miso paste) and freshly ground black pepper to taste

FOR THE GARLIC GREENS AND PASTA:

1½ lb. broccoli raab, trimmed and chopped coarse
 1 medium red onion, cut into slivers
 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
 1 (19-oz.) can white cannellini beans, drained
 1 large tomato, seeded and chopped coarse
 2 tsp. minced garlic
 12 oz. penne pasta, cooked
 ½ bunch basil (1 oz.), washed and chopped
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
 ½ Tbs. black olive paste (optional)
 Tabasco (optional)

To make the tomato broth—Put all the vegetables and vegetable trimmings in a large saucepan. Add the tomato juice and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat and maintain a slow simmer for about 1 hour, adding the herbs and chiles during the last 20 min. of cooking. Season with salt or miso and pepper, if desired, and strain.

To make the greens and pasta—If you're using a microwave oven, put the broccoli raab in a microwave-safe dish with an inch of water. Cover loosely and microwave on high for 3 min. Alternatively, bring a pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the raab and cook until tender, 2 to 3 min. Either way, immediately dip the raab in ice water to "shock" it and stop the cooking. Drain and set aside.

In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, sauté the onion in the oil until translucent. Add the raab and cook briefly. Add the beans, tomato, garlic, and penne; stir to combine well. Add the basil, salt, pepper, olive paste, and about ¾ cup tomato broth; toss to combine. Serve in large bowls topped with more tomato broth and Tabasco on the side.

Steve Petusevsky is the creative food director at Unicorn Village in Aventura, Florida. He writes a regular recipe column in the Miami Herald. ♦



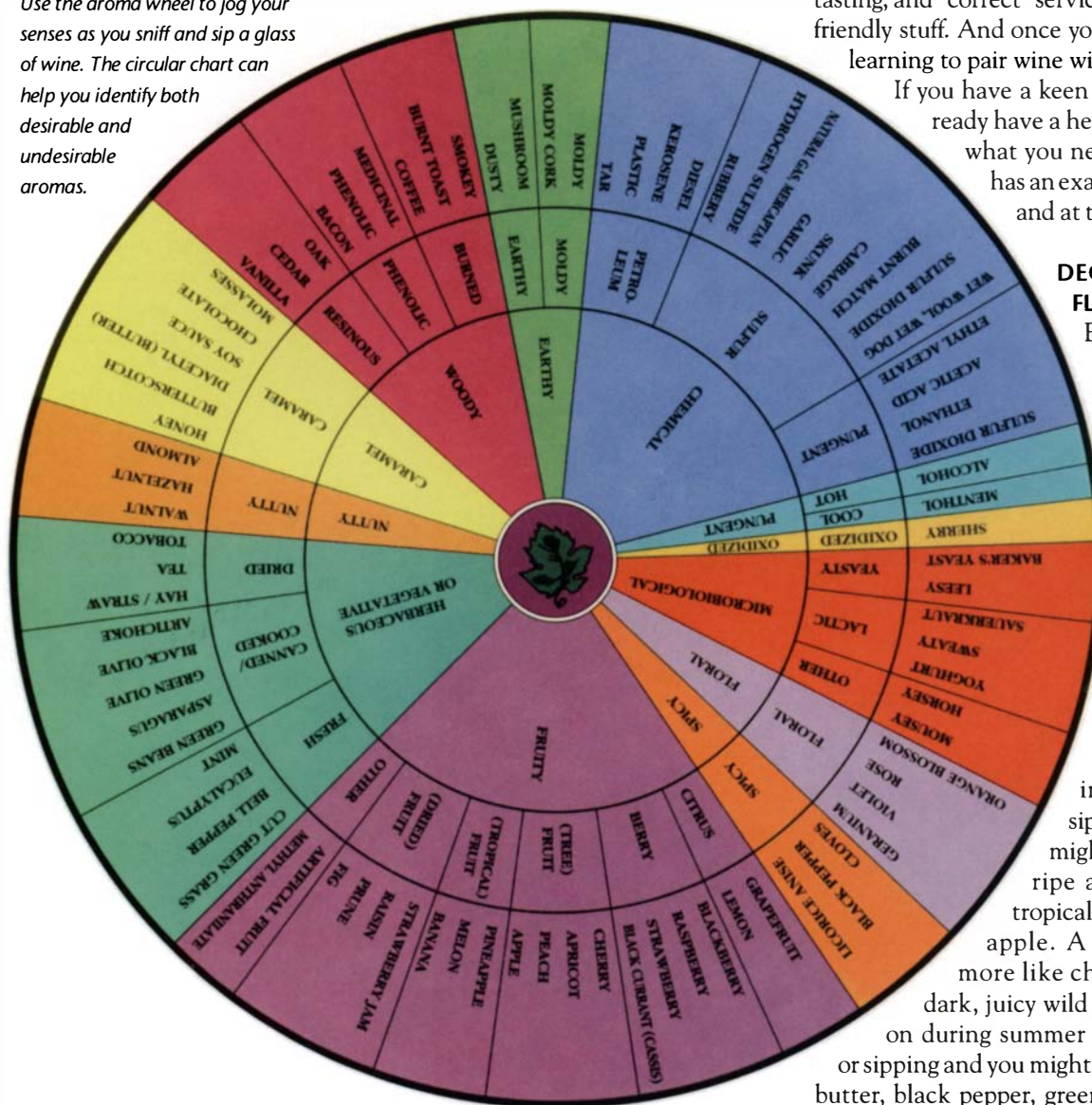
A spicy tomato broth unites greens with pasta. Broccoli raab has long been a staple ingredient of Italian cooking and is a natural partner for white beans, onions, and fresh tomatoes.

Which Wine for Dinner?

A user-friendly guide to successful wine and food partnerships

BY ROSINA TINARI WILSON

Aromatherapy for wine lovers?
Use the aroma wheel to jog your senses as you sniff and sip a glass of wine. The circular chart can help you identify both desirable and undesirable aromas.



Brash, brawny, and muscular, with a prodigious nose, thick legs, and a powerhouse finish.”

“A vibrant flash of midsummer moonlight on a still, velvety lake.”

“Lean, racy, and angular, but disappointingly closed and elusive.”

What are we talking about here? An Olympic weightlifter? A UFO sighting? A snobby supermodel? No, the fanciful (and tongue-in-cheek) quotes that you’ve just read all refer to wine. With hype like this running rampant, it’s small wonder that the average American would rather order a beer. That’s a shame because wine is really quite simple. Despite all the winebabbles, the tongue-twisting terminology (try saying *Trockenbeerenauslese* ten times fast), the endless details of grape growing, winemaking, labeling, tasting, and “correct” service, wine can be very user-friendly stuff. And once you have the basics down, learning to pair wine with food comes naturally.

If you have a keen interest in food, you already have a head start, because most of what you need to know about wine has an exact parallel in the kitchen and at the table.

DECONSTRUCTING THE FLAVOR OF WINE

Every wine owes its unique character to a balance of three very simple building blocks: fruit and other aromatics, acidity, and tannin. Alcohol is a component, but it’s practically flavorless; sugar can be ignored because most table wines are very dry.

Fruit and other aromatics. Fruit in a wine is the first thing you zero in on when you sniff or sip. If the wine is white, it might remind you of apples, ripe apricots, or something tropical, such as mango or pineapple. A red wine might seem more like cherries, plums, or those dark, juicy wild berries that you feasted on during summer vacation. Keep sniffing or sipping and you might pick up a hint of vanilla, butter, black pepper, green olive, or roses. Wine-



AROMA SLEUTHING

Test your ability to recognize aromas in wine by making a "mystery box." Put samples of typical fragrant ingredients in small, numbered containers that conceal the items and then try to identify the contents by sniffing. Work with a partner and test each other. Possible ingredients include coffee, lemon peel, cocoa powder, vinegar, mint, cinnamon, black pepper, vanilla, green bell pepper, and fruits such as berries, apples, or pineapple.

babble again? No, this is real. Wines actually do mimic fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, and other products of nature. Chemically speaking, the same built-in fragrances that make these fruits and other natural products smell the way they do can also occur in wine, giving the wine those exact same aromas.

To put it another way, a wine can smell like bell peppers because it contains the same stuff that makes bell peppers smell like bell peppers: 2-methoxy 3-isobutyl pyrazine. Vanilla smells the way it does thanks to a substance called vanillin. Found naturally in vanilla beans, vanillin also occurs in oak, so wines aged in oak barrels (Chardonnay is a prime example) can come out smelling like vanilla. Roses smell the way they do because of a compound called geraniol. If a wine (Gewürztraminer, for instance) contains geraniol, it too will smell like roses.

At latest count, more than 800 such aroma compounds have been identified in wine, many of which also occur in foods and other common substances. Knowing this can help you to understand the wine fully, whether you're a novice or an expert wine taster. And a fuller understanding leads to making the best possible partnerships at the table.

The aroma wheel. There's a tremendously useful tool that helpstasters sort out these wine characteristics by grouping them into familiar categories. Developed in the 1980s at the University of California at Davis, it's known as the wine aroma wheel (at left). The aroma wheel arranges general categories, such as fruity, spicy, and floral, at the center of the wheel like wedges of a pie, and then subdivides these as you move outward to give specific terms, such as peach, clove, and violet. The wheel lists undesirable as well as desirable aromas; this can help the taster recognize flaws in the wine. Not only can any given wine contain a combination of these aromas, but you might also find aromas not on the wheel, such as papaya, nutmeg, or jasmine.

The advantage of using the aroma wheel is that it describes wine objectively, based on actual scientific fact. It also nudges our "sensory memory" by suggesting a wide range of possibilities for what we're smelling.

Acidity. Imagine biting into a slice of lemon—the thought alone makes your mouth water. That's because of the lemon's natural acidity. Likewise, the natural acidity in a wine is very obvious. It can have some of the same effects as lemon juice, bringing out the flavors of the wine itself, and bringing out the food's natural flavor. What's more, the natural acids

in a wine can help cut through rich, fatty foods just as a squeeze of lemon would, refreshing your palate and setting up your taste buds for the next bite.

If the acid level of a wine is too low, not only will the wine seem flat and dull by itself but it won't be able to perk up the flavors of food. And if it's too high, the wine will taste thin and sour. Winemakers the world over realize the vital importance of acidity, and literally work overtime (even going to such lengths as harvesting at night, when acid levels rise) to get good, consistent acidity in their grapes, year in and year out.

Tannin. Have you ever tasted a just-made red wine, straight from the barrel? Or chewed on a grape pit, a coffee bean, or a freshly shelled walnut? Remember that dry, puckery feeling, that sense that your tongue is sticking to the roof of your mouth? The culprit is tannin, which is found in the hard, woody parts of plants. In wine, tannins come from the grape seeds, skins, and stems, and they feel rough, gritty, or "furry" in the mouth. Red wines are more tannic than whites because during winemaking, the juice stays in contact with the skins, stems, and seeds longer.

The right amount of tannin can benefit a wine greatly, preserving it against spoilage or too-rapid

aging. This is why red wines age better than whites. And as anyone who has tasted a twenty-year-old Cabernet or Bordeaux knows, tannins soften over time, turning that harsh mouth-feel silky and smooth. Since tannin bonds chemically with both protein and fat, foods such as meat or cheese can make even a young, tannic wine taste less rough and more enjoyable.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MATCH?

Ask the average person how to go about pairing wine with food, and you'll either get a blank stare or some form of the old maxim "white wine with fish, red wine with meat." This rule of thumb works pretty well as far as it goes, but if you care about making the best food and wine matches possible, there's a bit more to it.

Fortunately, the basics of food and wine pairing are very simple, very straightforward, and very intuitive. In fact, you use the concepts already, probably without even realizing it, in many other facets of life including cooking.

The basics boil down to just a few simple principles. Using them, you can start with virtually any food, or any wine, and not only make any number of great matches but avoid bad ones as well.

GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS

To explore the compatibility of food and wine from the same region, try:

- an olive-oil-brushed grilled steak (*Bistecca Fiorentina*) or fresh pasta with wild mushrooms alongside a good-quality Chianti
- a plate of raw oysters with a crisp Muscadet from the shellfish-rich Brittany region of France
- a good bockwurst with a German Riesling or Gewürztraminer.





LIKE AND UNLIKE PAIRINGS

To examine the similarity and contrast principles of food and wine pairing, try this three-part tasting. Ask your wine merchant for

1) a buttery, creamy Chardonnay, 2) a tart, citrusy Sauvignon Blanc with no herbal tones, and 3) a Sauvignon Blanc with some herbal flavors. Now

make a simple chicken dish: sauté a chicken breast in butter, deglaze the pan with some heavy cream, and boil to reduce slightly to make a sauce. Season just with some salt. Taste this

with the buttery Chardonnay. Do you like the way the flavors and textures match?

Next pour a glass of the first Sauvignon Blanc. Do you like the way the wine's acidity cuts through the rich sauce, cleansing your palate for the next bite?

Now add some tarragon to the sauce and taste it with the third wine, the herbal Sauvignon Blanc. This wine will still show contrast with the creamy dish, but because there's an herbal quality to both the food and the wine, the pairing now shows similarity as well as contrast. Can you taste both effects?

Partners from the same hometown. Simply put, wine and food in certain parts of the world have evolved as partners. In places where wines have a long history, they tend to taste good with the local foods. And so we have the Rieslings of Germany with the sweet-spicy sausages, Chianti with Tuscan pasta, and closer to home, local Cabernets and Merlots with Sonoma lamb, Long Island duck, and Texas wild game.

The geographic, or regional, principle works nicely to a point. But for today's creative cooks, it just doesn't go far enough. For one, there are exciting, delicious cuisines from many parts of the world where wine is simply not part of the heritage—Southeast Asia, Latin America, and sections of the United States, for example. Moreover, today's inventive "fusion" cuisine, which combines ingredients and techniques from around the globe, blurs geographic boundaries.

So we need to look at other, more fundamental relationships between the wine and the food to find good partners.

Like with like. Think of the people you enjoy being with. It's likely you have a lot in common—similar backgrounds, interests, aspects of your personality which act to help forge a bond between you. With food and wine, the same thing can happen. When you can match a characteristic in the glass and on the plate, the wine and food tend to flow together, to mirror each other, to resonate,

emphasizing that characteristic. This is similar to unison in music: when all the voices or instruments are sounding the same note, the effect is powerful and dramatic.

If you start with a wine that has strong cherry character, such as a Merlot or a Pinot Noir, and make a cherry glaze or dried-cherry stuffing for a meat or poultry dish, the cherry flavors in the glass will echo those on the plate. Start with a fresh pineapple salsa for grilled fish and choose a fresh-tasting, pineappley Chardonnay to magnify the tropical flavors of both.

Opposites attract. Sometimes, however, having something in common isn't quite enough. You might find it more interesting to choose a mate or a friend who has different interests and whose personality complements rather than matches your own. This is comparable to harmony in music, when different notes, chosen deliberately, sound pleasing together.

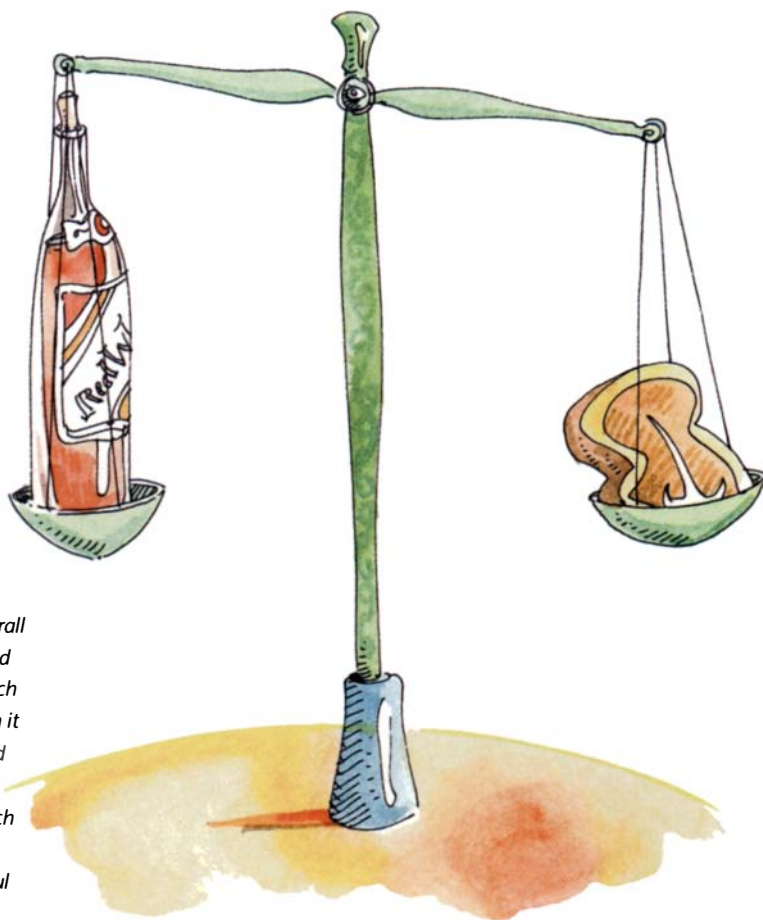
In the kitchen, you create such balances as sweet and sour flavors, hot and cold temperatures, smooth and crunchy textures. Likewise, when you pair a food with a wine because of intentional differences, the whole—ideally—can seem greater than the sum of its parts. This is the contrast principle, and it brings added interest and complexity to food and wine matches.

Although these similarity and contrast principles seem contradictory, both are equally valid—

EQUAL-INTENSITY PRINCIPLE

To see how the overall intensity of food and wine matches, poach a fillet of sole, finish it with just lemon and parsley, and pour a light white wine such as a Chenin Blanc. Next, grill a flavorful steak, season with garlic, mustard, and rosemary, and serve a big Syrah or Cabernet Sauvignon. Notice how the body and strength of flavor of the pairings match in both cases. Now try reversing the wines. Does the steak wipe out the delicate white wine? Does the red wine knock the fish out of the water?

You can also try a medium-intensity dish, such as a roast chicken with mushroom sauce, with both a full-bodied white wine, such as a Chardonnay, and a light red, such as a Pinot Noir. You might like both for different reasons.



and they can coexist in the same food and wine pairing.

Equal intensity. The most important thing to remember, though, when pairing food and wine, is to keep either one from overpowering the other. Both partners should have about the same weight in the mouth, the same strength of flavor. This is the equal-intensity principle, and it holds true whether the food and wine are both delicate, both full-flavored, or both middle-of-the-road.

You can also fine-tune the equal-intensity principle if you want either the food or the wine to stand out in any given pairing. Start, for example, with a dish that you really want to show off. Instead of choosing an exactly equal partner in the glass, pour something a bit lighter. Likewise, if you want the wine to star, cook your dish more simply.

HONING YOUR SKILLS—KEEP TASTING

Just as with food, which is endlessly varied and fascinating, the more you learn about wine, the more there is to know. To keep as current as possible, haunt your local bottle shop and check out the wine magazines, especially those that describe and rate recent releases. And wine, like food, is easy to enjoy even without special knowledge. As a cook, you already

possess the instincts for putting the two together.

Hone your skills even further by holding wine tastings, sampling the wines either alone or with food. You can set these up according to themes: open six Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Noirs, Italian reds, or sparklers from different parts of the world. Taste and see what they have in common and how they differ. Or pour an array of different types of wines, whites and reds, and test them out with a series of dishes. Invite some like-minded friends to join you, have them do the “mystery box” exercise (see the sidebar on p. 37) as a warm-up, and then turn everyone loose and compare notes.

You’ll not only learn a lot about the wines and the way they work with food, but you’ll also learn a great deal about your own palate. Best of all, you’ll be adding an extra dimension to the pleasures of the table—one that you can continue to explore every time you pull the cork on a bottle of wine.

Rosina Tinari Wilson is a food, wine, and travel writer and consultant based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She teaches the Food and Wine Affinities course at the California Culinary Academy and has just published a cookbook, Seafood, Pasta & Noodles—The New Classics (Ten Speed Press, 1994). ♦



All about Chocolate

Selecting, handling, and storing everyone's favorite ingredient

BY CAROLE BLOOM

I'm crazy about chocolate, and I know I'm not alone. I spend a good part of my professional life working with chocolate, and off-duty I certainly enjoy my share of it. I've gained a better appreciation for chocolate by learning about its cultivation, processing, and various types. And of course, knowing how to handle chocolate properly in the kitchen only adds to the pleasures of this favorite ingredient.

CHOCOLATE GROWS ON TREES

Chocolate may not seem like it comes from a plant, but its source is the fruit of the cocoa tree, *Theobroma cacao*. It's primarily cultivated in equatorial regions of the world (where the climate is warm and humid), although some chocolate is now being produced in Hawaii.

Cocoa trees that grow in the wild can reach heights of up to sixty feet. Cultivated trees, however, are raised in the shade of tall, large-leaved "mother" trees, usually banana trees, rubber trees, or coconut palms. These mother trees keep the cocoa trees from growing much more than twenty feet tall, making it easier to harvest the beans.

As many as 5,000 tiny flowers at a time will bloom on a cocoa tree; these flowers will develop in slow succession into large, deeply ridged, football-size pods that look something like large papayas. At any given time, the cocoa tree will simultaneously support flowers, unripe green pods, and ripe orange or yellow pods. Oddly, the pods will sprout not only from the branches of the tree, but all along the trunk as well. Within the ripe pods, a milky-white, pulpy membrane holds twenty to forty almond-shaped, ivory-colored cocoa beans.

Dark chocolates are complex like fine wines. And like coffee, chocolate becomes darker in color and richer in flavor with longer roasting.

When ready for harvest, the pods are cut from the trees and the beans are removed along with their membrane. The beans are placed on banana leaves or in large vats, covered with leaves, and left to ferment for a few days, while the membrane evaporates and the beans darken in color. The beans are then sun-dried for several days. After drying, they're packed into burlap sacks and

shipped to factories to be processed.

There are two main botanical varieties of cocoa trees: criollo and forastero. The criollo tree is native to Ecuador and Venezuela. It produces the highest-quality beans, even though the trees are small and difficult to cultivate. Forastero trees, grown mainly in equatorial Africa and Brazil, provide about 90% of the world's harvest of cocoa beans. The forastero bean is harsher and more bitter than the criollo bean. Usually the two varieties are blended together. Capuacu (*Theobroma grandiflorum*), a relative of cocoa native to the Brazilian rain forest, has recently been discovered and is being cultivated in the Amazon. Capuacu (pronounced COOP-oo-ah-sue) beans produce a rich, mellow-flavored chocolate with fruity undertones.

MAKING CHOCOLATE

After the cocoa beans arrive at a factory, they're roasted at 250° to 350°F for thirty minutes to two hours. It's during the roasting process that the fermented and dried beans begin to smell like chocolate. Each crop of beans is evaluated to determine the precise roasting time and temperature—two determining factors in the final flavor of the chocolate. Generally, the flavors are strengthened and become increasingly bitter with longer roasting times.

Once roasted, the outer husk of the cocoa bean is cracked and blown away through a process called winnowing, which leaves the bean's inner nib behind. The different varieties of beans (nibs at this stage) are blended to achieve the desired flavor. Although there are only two main varieties of cocoa

trees, there are many variations of beans as a result of geographic origin and because hybrids of the two trees have evolved. Precise roasting times, roasting temperatures, and blending ratios are the trade secrets of every chocolate manufacturer. Combined, these factors are what make various brands of chocolate taste different.

The blended nibs are simultaneously ground and heated to melt their natural cocoa butter, which turns the entire mass to a liquid known as chocolate liquor. When cooled, it's called cocoa paste. Without the addition of sugar or more cocoa butter, it is at this point plain, bitter chocolate (also known as baking chocolate), which isn't too pleasing to the palate.

Cocoa powder and cocoa butter. Separating chocolate paste's two elements, raw cocoa powder and cocoa butter, is the first step in making finished cocoa powder. Cocoa paste is pressed in large hydraulic machines to extract the cocoa butter. What's left behind are dry cocoa cakes, called press cakes. These press cakes are cooled, crushed, ground, and sifted to produce cocoa powder. If the cocoa powder is "Dutch-processed," the chocolate liquor is treated with an alkaline solution before it is pressed. This makes the finished cocoa powder darker, mellow, and more flavorful. The extracted cocoa butter is saved and cooled into slabs for finishing other chocolate products.

True chocolate. What we regard as straight "eating" chocolate is made from the chocolate liquor with the addition of more cocoa butter, sugar, vanilla, and sometimes milk solids. The chocolate is then kneaded or "conched" (pro-

Where would bakers be without cocoa powder? Its wonderfully mellow chocolate flavor is an essential ingredient in many confections, and it can easily warm up the coldest of nights when stirred into hot milk.



Photos except where noted: Matthew Kestenbaum

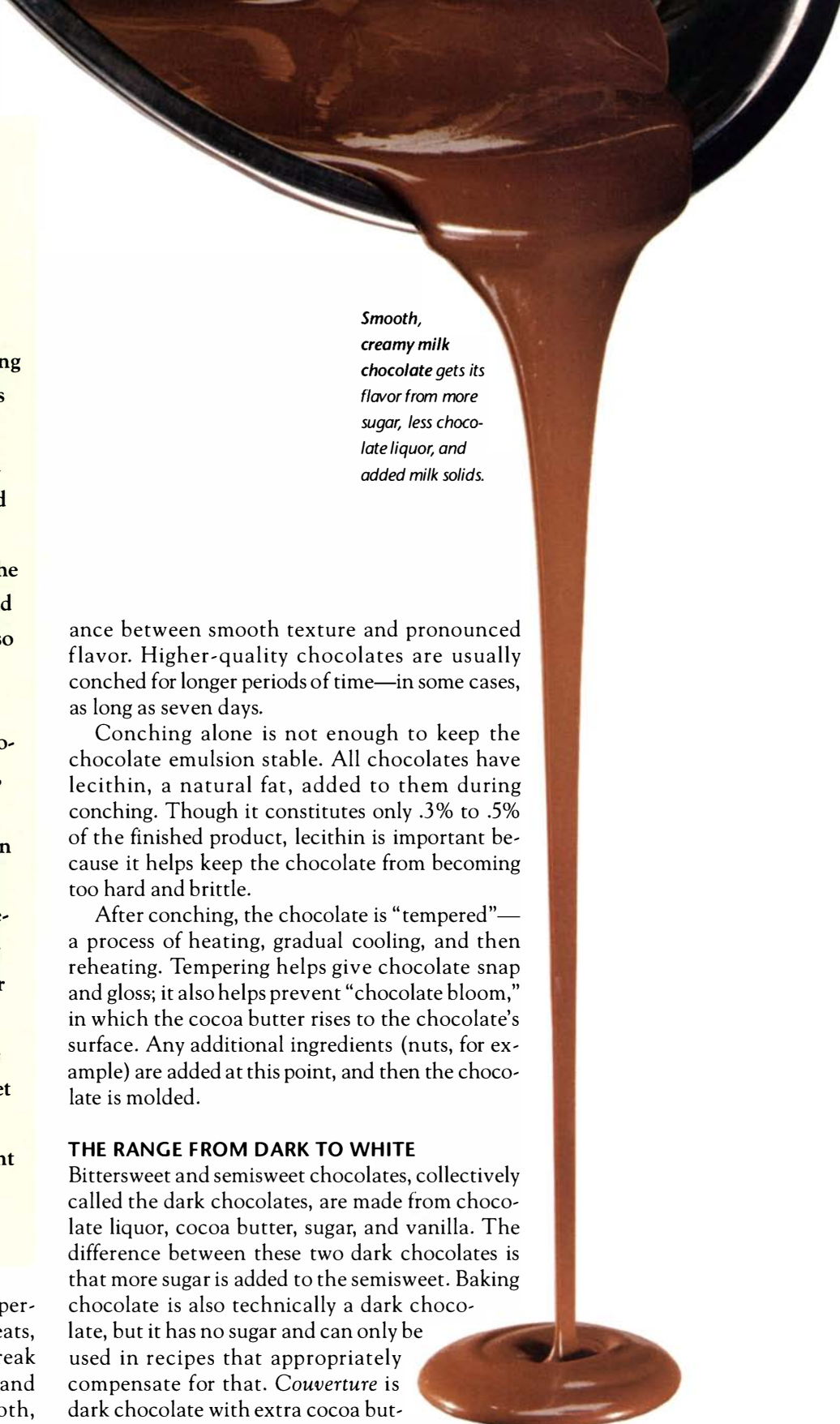
A choice of chocolates

The best way to select chocolate is to taste it plain. A chocolate's flavor won't change when you bake with it, so be sure you find one that tastes good right out of hand.

Some easy things to notice when choosing chocolate are the appearance and aroma. Is the chocolate evenly colored and shiny? Does it smell rich and flavorful? When you break the chocolate, does it snap firmly and cleanly? When you taste it, is it smooth, creamy, and does it melt in your mouth? The flavor itself should be generally pleasing and harmonious. The aftertaste, or finish, is also important: a good chocolate's flavor will linger in your mouth.

Generally, the European brands of chocolate are the highest quality and best tasting, although there are good American-made brands. Some of the most popular European brands—and my favorites—are Valrhôna and Cacao Barry (both from France), Callebaut (from Belgium), and Lindt and Tobler (both from Switzerland). The most popular and, I think, the best-tasting American brands are Ghirardelli and Guittard. These brands of chocolate are available at gourmet and imported food shops, cookware stores, some major supermarkets, some department stores, and through mail-order sources (see p. 45).—C.B.

nounced KAHNCHT). The conching process is performed by a heavy roller that continuously heats, mixes, grinds, and stirs the chocolate to break down any remaining bits of cocoa butter and solids, leaving a homogenous, satiny-smooth, melt-in-the-mouth texture. Conching is one of the steps in processing that helps keep the emulsion of cocoa butter and chocolate liquor stable. The longer the chocolate is conched, the smoother the final product will be. This process, however, also weakens the chocolate flavor, so chocolate makers must be careful to strike a bal-



Smooth, creamy milk chocolate gets its flavor from more sugar, less chocolate liquor, and added milk solids.

ance between smooth texture and pronounced flavor. Higher-quality chocolates are usually conched for longer periods of time—in some cases, as long as seven days.

Conching alone is not enough to keep the chocolate emulsion stable. All chocolates have lecithin, a natural fat, added to them during conching. Though it constitutes only .3% to .5% of the finished product, lecithin is important because it helps keep the chocolate from becoming too hard and brittle.

After conching, the chocolate is “tempered”—a process of heating, gradual cooling, and then reheating. Tempering helps give chocolate snap and gloss; it also helps prevent “chocolate bloom,” in which the cocoa butter rises to the chocolate's surface. Any additional ingredients (nuts, for example) are added at this point, and then the chocolate is molded.

THE RANGE FROM DARK TO WHITE

Bittersweet and semisweet chocolates, collectively called the dark chocolates, are made from chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, sugar, and vanilla. The difference between these two dark chocolates is that more sugar is added to the semisweet. Baking chocolate is also technically a dark chocolate, but it has no sugar and can only be used in recipes that appropriately compensate for that. *Couverture* is dark chocolate with extra cocoa butter, which gives it a high gloss. It's ideal for the thin, glossy coatings of many candies—hence its name, which means “blanket” in French. Milk chocolate has less chocolate liquor and more sugar than the dark chocolates, as well as the addition of milk solids.

White chocolate is made from cocoa butter, milk



Chopping chocolate is easy with a heavy chef's knife and a stable wooden cutting board. Don't try to cut off big chunks; just shave off a bit at a time, putting the pressure on the heel of the knife.

Low heat and constant stirring yield smooth melted chocolate. A rubber spatula is ideal for scraping and stirring. Use a water bath to keep the heat at a minimum.



solids, sugar, and vanilla. When buying white chocolate, be aware that products called “summer coating” and “compound coating” use a vegetable fat other than cocoa butter as their base. Since these products lack cocoa butter, they don't taste like chocolate.

Using one chocolate for another. As a rule, the dark chocolates can be easily substituted for each other in recipes. Whether you use bitter-sweet or semisweet chocolate is simply a matter of personal preference. Milk chocolate and white chocolate, however, can't be substituted for the dark chocolates or for each other because they have much less chocolate liquor and have the addition of milk solids. These “lighter” chocolates also have different handling characteristics: the milk solids burn easily and will form lumps when melted over excessive heat. Many novices will see lumps appear as the chocolate is melting and increase the heat, believing that the chocolate is simply not melting. This only aggravates the problem, as more heat will create more lumps. All the proportions of a recipe must be completely reworked to substitute one of the lighter chocolates for darker ones.

KEEP CHOCOLATE AWAY FROM WATER

Chocolate must be handled gently in order to preserve its glossy look and satiny texture. Because it's an emulsion, chocolate is very sensitive to added moisture. The first rule when working with chocolate is to prevent liquid from coming into contact with it unless a recipe specifically calls for it. Liquid causes melted chocolate to “seize”—it thickens and becomes the consistency of mud. This happens because the sugar particles begin to fall out of the

emulsion and the chocolate can no longer remain fluid. When working with chocolate, make sure all your utensils are completely dry.

However, adding a large amount of liquid—more than 25% by volume—will not cause the chocolate to seize. When added in this quantity, the liquid actually forms a new emulsion with chocolate. This new, looser emulsion is what allows us to make rich, wonderful chocolate sauces and ganache (see *Fine Cooking* #2, pp. 64–69).

Chocolate that has seized cannot be salvaged. Adding a few tablespoons of vegetable oil will bring the mixture back to a even consistency, but then you're no longer dealing with chocolate. It's best just to throw out the seized chocolate and start over.

The ideal environment for working with chocolate is 65°F with low humidity. If you can't help working with chocolate on damp days, try using a dehumidifier in your kitchen. An air conditioner also works wonders when working with chocolate in hot, muggy weather.

MELT CHOCOLATE GENTLY

Chocolate should be melted slowly over low heat. It should never come into direct contact with heat and should not be heated over 120° (or 115° for white chocolate). Overheating chocolate will cause it to taste burnt, to develop lumps, or to seize up. Again, the lighter chocolates, because of their added milk solids, are more sensitive to heat than the dark chocolates. The milk solids coagulate with too much heat, leaving lumps in the chocolate.

Chocolate should be chopped into very small pieces before melting, so that it melts evenly and with little heat. A chef's knife and a wooden cutting board are the best utensils for this; don't use a

SOURCES FOR CHOCOLATE

The Chocolate Gallery, 56 West 22nd St., New York, NY 10010; 212/675-CAKE. *Valrhôna, Van Leer.*

Dean & DeLuca, 560 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; 800/221-7714. Catalog available, \$3. *Callebaut, Ghirardelli, Valrhôna.*

Ferncliff House, PO Box 177, Tremont City, OH 45372; 513/390-6420. Catalog available. *Guittard, Merckens, Nestlé, Van Leer.*

Harry Wils & Co., Inc., 182 Duane St., New York, NY 10013; 800/362-9688. Catalog available; checks only. *Cacao Barry, Valrhôna.*

La Cuisine, 323 Cameron St., Alexandria, VA 22314; 800/521-1176. Catalog available, \$3. *Cacao Barry, Callebaut, Valrhôna.*

Maison Glass, 111 E. 58th St., New York, NY 10022; 800/U-CALL-MG. Catalog available, \$5. *Callebaut, Valrhôna.*

Sweet Celebrations, 7009 Washington Ave. South, Edina, MN 55439; 800/328-6722. Catalog available. *Nestlé, Peters.*

food processor because it will prematurely heat the chocolate.

The best way to melt chocolate is in the top of a double boiler over hot (not simmering) water. Be sure the top pan of the boiler fits snugly over the bottom, so no steam can escape and mix with the chocolate. A glass double boiler is ideal because you can see if the water in the bottom pan is overheating. Be sure to use a double boiler that's big enough to hold the chocolate and allow some room for stirring.

Microwave ovens are also good for melting chocolate, as long as you're very careful. Using a medium power level, you'll need to stop the oven every 15 seconds and stir vigorously.

KEEP YOUR CHOCOLATE IN PRIME CONDITION

Chocolate is best stored at room temperature, wrapped in foil or brown paper. Storing chocolate in the refrigerator, in the freezer, or in plastic wrap will trap condensation. When stored in a cool, dry place, dark chocolate has an indefinite shelf life. Chocolate has a high fat content which picks up other flavors, so be careful of what other foods you store near it. Because of their milk-solid content, the lighter chocolates are best stored no longer than a year. If



White chocolate isn't quite chocolate—it contains no chocolate liquor. With high percentages of cocoa butter and milk solids, it's the most temperature-sensitive of all chocolates.

Good chocolate should make you smile. The author buys her Callebaut in 15-pound blocks so she always has some handy.

you're unsure of the quality of your chocolate, smell it; if it has a rancid odor, throw it out.

Any chocolate that's left after dipping truffles or candies can be saved as long as nothing else has been mixed with it. Simply transfer the chocolate to a clean container or bowl, cover tightly, and store it at room temperature.

Chocolate's complex flavors are best savored at room temperature, so if you've stored a chocolate cake or other dessert in the refrigerator, be sure to allow it to warm up before you serve it. Chocolate candies, confections, and some cakes and other desserts can be frozen if very well wrapped. Because rapid temperature changes can cause the chocolate coating to crack, frozen chocolates should be allowed to defrost for at least 24 hours in the refrigerator before they're brought out to stand at room temperature.

Carole Bloom is the author of the newly published The International Dictionary of Desserts, Pastries & Confections, as well as Truffles, Candies & Confections—Elegant Candymaking in the Home, and the forthcoming The Candy Cookbook. She has trained extensively throughout Europe and is a Certified Culinary Professional. ♦

Peking Duck at Home

Wrap up slivers of crisp duck for a showy appetizer

BY CLARK FRASIER

Filling the pancake is part of the fun. Brush the sweet and tangy sauce on a Mandarin pancake with a scallion, and then layer on succulent duck, crispy duck skin, and crunchy vegetables.



How do you celebrate Thanksgiving in Beijing if you can't find a turkey? This was a tough question to answer for me and some fellow students who were studying in China during the early 1980s. Even if we'd found a turkey, our dormitory camp stoves were woefully inadequate for cooking such a large bird. So instead we opted for the local equivalent—Peking duck. Perfectly roasted and golden-glazed, served with tender Mandarin pancakes, a tangy sauce, and crunchy vegetable garnishes, the duck was quite worthy of our Thanksgiving celebration.

I tried to visit all the famous duck restaurants while I lived in Beijing. The novelty of a young Anglo speaking Mandarin Chinese was frequently enough to get me into the kitchens and drying rooms where I could ask questions about how the ducks were prepared. Later, when I opened Arrows Restaurant in Maine, my partner Mark Gaier and I were determined to use the rich culinary tradition of China—in particular to feature my favorite dish, Peking duck. Drawing on my experiences in the kitchens of Beijing and on the recipes of Chinese friends, we created this recipe. We usually serve the duck as an appetizer for a special party.

Although Peking duck has a reputation for complexity, there are really just a few simple steps, spread over a 24-hour period. Since the crispy skin is what makes the dish so memorable, you must allow enough time for the duck to air-dry thoroughly. The only part that takes much time at all is making the Mandarin pancakes. The pancakes, sauce, and garnishes can be prepared ahead of time, and even the duck reheats nicely, so you can get everything ready before your guests arrive.

DRYING THE DUCK FOR A CRISPY SKIN

The people of Beijing (formerly written Peking) pride themselves on the quality of their duck. To make the best Peking duck, you want to start with the best duck you can find. See if your butcher can get you a fresh one that weighs four to five pounds. If you just can't find anything but a frozen duck, defrost it very slowly overnight in your refrigerator. Though freezing changes the texture of meats, duck freezes better

than most meats because of its high fat content. Remove any innards that come packaged in the duck, wash the duck under cold running water, and dry it thoroughly with a towel.

Loosening the skin—The next step is to separate the skin from the fatty tissue directly underneath it so that the skin crisps well when it cooks. To do this, you could make tiny cuts and run your fingers under the skin. An easier and more authentic method is to use a bicycle pump. Not many chefs think of a bicycle pump as an integral part of their cooking equipment, but at Arrows it was one of the first purchases we made. Attach a clean pin (the kind used to inflate balls) to the pump and insert the pin just under the duck's skin. As you pump, the skin will inflate and separate from the bird (see photo at right) and then deflate again. Don't be afraid to

make several punctures in the legs and along the breast, but don't bother pumping up the underside of the bird (this part will be sitting in water while the duck cooks). It always makes for good conversation when you tell your guests that you needed a bicycle pump to make what they're eating.

Hanging to dry—After the fun of blowing up the duck, the next important stage is drying. The duck must hang for at least four hours for the skin to dry out; overnight is even better. I tie up the duck with a piece of butcher's twine. The easiest way I've found to attach the twine to the bird is to cut a small slit near the tail end of the duck, fold the twine in half to form a loop, and run

the loop through the slit. I then feed the cut ends through the loop and pull the twine until it's taut (see photo at right).

The question then is where to hang the thing. You'll want a place that's cool and dry. If the weather is cool (below 40°F), try hanging the duck from a beam or a hook in your garage or basement. Put a tray under the duck to catch any fluid, and if you have an electric fan, set it up in front of the duck on low speed. If you can't find a cool place to hang it, make room in the back of your refrigerator and prop the duck up so that air can circulate around it.

Dipping in glaze and drying again—Just before the duck is finished drying, get the glaze ready. Peel the ginger and slice it into broad strips. There's no

PEKING DUCK

Serves six as an appetizer.

1 duck, 4 to 5 pounds

GLAZE:

1½-inch piece of ginger

12 scallions

3 cups water

3 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons Chinese rice wine

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

3 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in ½ cup water

PANCAKES:

4 cups all-purpose flour

1½ cups boiling water

⅓ cup Chinese sesame oil

SAUCE:

2 teaspoons Chinese sesame oil

½ cup hoisin sauce

4 teaspoons sugar

¼ cup water

GARNISH:

12 scallions (white parts reserved from glaze)

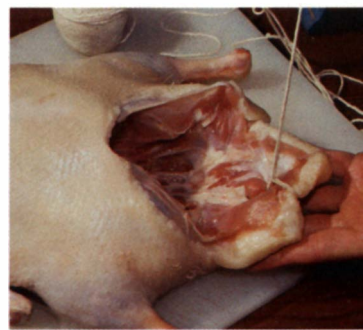
1 cucumber

1 red bell pepper

1 yellow bell pepper



Pump it up. Separating the duck skin from the flesh with a bicycle pump makes the skin even crispier when it cooks. The author learned this technique in China.



String up the duck securely to dry for several hours. Cut a small slit about 1½ inches from the edge of the tail skin and run a loop of string through. Pull the ends of the string through the loop, and hang the duck by the string.



Shiny glaze adds flavor, too. After drying overnight, the duck is dipped in a cornstarch-thickened glaze that's flavored with ginger and scallions.

Thin pancakes are easy to roll if you let the dough rest first. Shape the "relaxed" dough into balls and then pat each ball into a flat disk before rolling out.



need to make perfect-looking pieces because they're just there for flavor. Chop the green leaves off the scallions about 5 inches from the white end. (Reserve the white parts; they'll be used later to make scallion brushes.) In a wok or a large, deep sauté pan, combine the ginger and the green leaves of the scallions with the water, honey, rice wine, and rice vinegar. Bring the mixture to a boil. Stir the cornstarch into a half cup of cold water and pour it into the wok. Stir the glaze as it returns to a boil and heat until it becomes thick enough to coat a spoon.

Holding the duck by the string, lower it into the boiling glaze. Slide and roll the duck around in the pan until it is completely coated with the glaze (see

top photo at left). Lift the duck out, let any excess glaze drip off, and dip the duck again. Take the duck out again and, when it stops dripping, return it to its hanging spot and let it dry for at least two more hours.

Roasting the duck—Now that you've pumped the duck, hung it, dipped it, and hung it again, you're ready to roast it. Heat the oven to 350°. Put the duck, breast side up, in a roasting pan and pour an inch of water into the pan. The water keeps the duck moist while it cooks. Roast the duck for 2½ to 3 hours at 350°. Turn the pan around halfway through cooking to help the skin brown evenly. The duck is done when the skin is a molasses color, you can move the leg easily, and the meat gives slightly to your touch.

MAKING THIN AND CHEWY MANDARIN PANCAKES

While the duck is drying the second time (or when it's in the oven), you'll want to tackle the pancakes. Put the flour in a large bowl and gradually add the boiling water, mixing well with a wooden spoon until you have a ball of dough that comes away from the sides of the bowl. When the dough is cool enough to handle, dump it out on a lightly floured counter and knead it by hand until it's smooth, pliable, and elastic, about 10 minutes. You can also knead it in a stationary mixer with a dough hook. Let the dough rest for 15 minutes under a towel so it will "relax" and be easier to roll out. Then cut the dough into four pieces and roll each quarter into a thick "snake" on a lightly floured surface. Cut each snake into 6 pieces to give you 24 small pieces of dough. Roll each piece into a smooth ball with your hands, pat the ball into a flat disk, and then use a rolling pin to roll each disk into a 5-inch-diameter round about ⅛ inch thick (see photo at left). Use just enough flour on the pin and the counter to keep the dough from sticking.

Short cooking keeps them pliable—Cooking the pancakes is really the only tricky part—if you cook them too long they'll turn crispy and hard and you'll end up with Mandarin nachos instead, but too short will give you floury-tasting pancakes. Experiment first by cooking a couple to find the right amount of time on your stove before you cook all of them. Let them rest for a few minutes then check them—they should still be flexible enough to roll up. If they're stiff, don't cook the rest as long.

Cook the pancakes on a nonstick griddle or sauté pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, brush it with sesame oil and put in two or three pancakes, however many will fit without overlapping. Cook the pancakes briefly, peeking under with a spatula to check their progress. When the bottoms have turned light brown, flip the pancakes and cook them even more briefly on the second side. As you

The crackly skin is the best part

The crispy, caramelized skin is the payoff for taking the time to dry the duck thoroughly. I like to cut the bird into manageable sections, pull the skin off, and then cut the skin into thin strips. Don't forget about the tender, juicy meat. Once you've removed the skin, carve off the meat and shred it or slice it into thin strips.



1. Start with the legs. Cut the skin and meat between a leg and the breast. Then slice through the joint connecting the thigh to the body, removing the leg and thigh in one piece.



2. Peel the skin off the leg and slice it into thin strips. Repeat with the other leg.



3. Remove the breast skin in one piece. Starting at the tail end, slide your thumbs under the skin to separate it from the breast meat.



4. Cut the skin into two long pieces.



5. Slice each piece of skin into strips.

take them off the griddle, brush them lightly with more sesame oil and stack them. Brush more oil on the griddle after every couple of batches. When you've cooked the whole batch and they're cool, wrap them in aluminum foil and set them aside. To reheat before serving, just pop the wrapped pancakes into a 375° oven for about 4 minutes.

PREPARING THE GARNISHES

The scallion brushes are easy to make. With a sharp paring knife, cut off the tiny roots at the white bulb end. Then make several 1-inch-deep cuts in a cross pattern in the white end. Put the scallions in ice water and set them aside. The brushes will curl as the scallions soak up water.

Next, slice the cucumber into thin rounds. I like to first score the cucumber lengthwise with a channel knife to make decorative grooves before slicing them. If you don't have one of these gadgets, you may want to invest in one—they're only a couple of dollars at any kitchen store and they're lots of fun.

At the restaurant, we use strips of red and yellow bell pepper for color in presenting our Peking duck. This isn't traditional, but I think the taste goes quite well and it looks great. To make the strips, peel the skin off the peppers with a vegetable peeler. Using a chef's knife, cut off the ends of the peppers and slice through one part of the pepper to open it up flat. Holding the knife parallel to the cutting board, slice off the white ribbing inside the peppers. Then cut the flesh into 1/8-inch julienne.

Make the sauce by combining all the ingredients in a bowl, stirring well to dissolve the sugar. The hoisin sauce is the dominant flavor, so choose one that tastes good. Koon Chun is the brand I like, and

it's available in many Asian markets. When you have added the other ingredients to the hoisin, the sauce should be the consistency of a thin ketchup. Some chefs boil this mixture to dissolve the sugar, but I find that this isn't necessary.

PRESENTING THE DUCK INDIVIDUALLY OR FAMILY STYLE

Let the roasted duck rest until it's cool enough to handle, and then pull off the skin and carve the duck (see the photos on p. 49). Cut both the skin and the meat into 1/4-inch strips. You can serve the duck at once, or allow it to cool and then reheat it briefly in the oven with the pancakes when your guests are ready to eat.

At Arrows, we usually serve Peking duck as a first course—one duck will serve six people as an appetizer. We like to make individual servings by first arranging the cucumbers and bell peppers around the outside of a plate (see photo below). We then pour a pool of sauce in the center of the plate, arrange the meat and skin on the sauce, and put a scallion brush at the top and a folded pancake at the bottom. This makes a spectacular presentation.

You can also set the duck and its garnishes out on serving platters and let your guests assemble the pancakes themselves, which is a great way to start a party. No matter how you decide to serve your duck, you'll find—as I did one Thanksgiving Day in China—that Peking duck is a glorious dish.

After travelling extensively through Asia and Europe and cooking professionally in California, Clark Frasier opened his own restaurant, Arrows, in Ogunquit, Maine, with Mark Gaier. ♦

Peking duck for one.
To make a beautiful individual serving, the author first circles the plate with thin cucumber rounds, then makes a crosshatch pattern from strips of red and yellow bell peppers. The sauce is spooned into a circular puddle in the center of the plate, and topped first with duck meat and then the crispy skin. A folded pancake and a scallion brush placed on opposite sides finish the plate. More pancakes are served on the side.

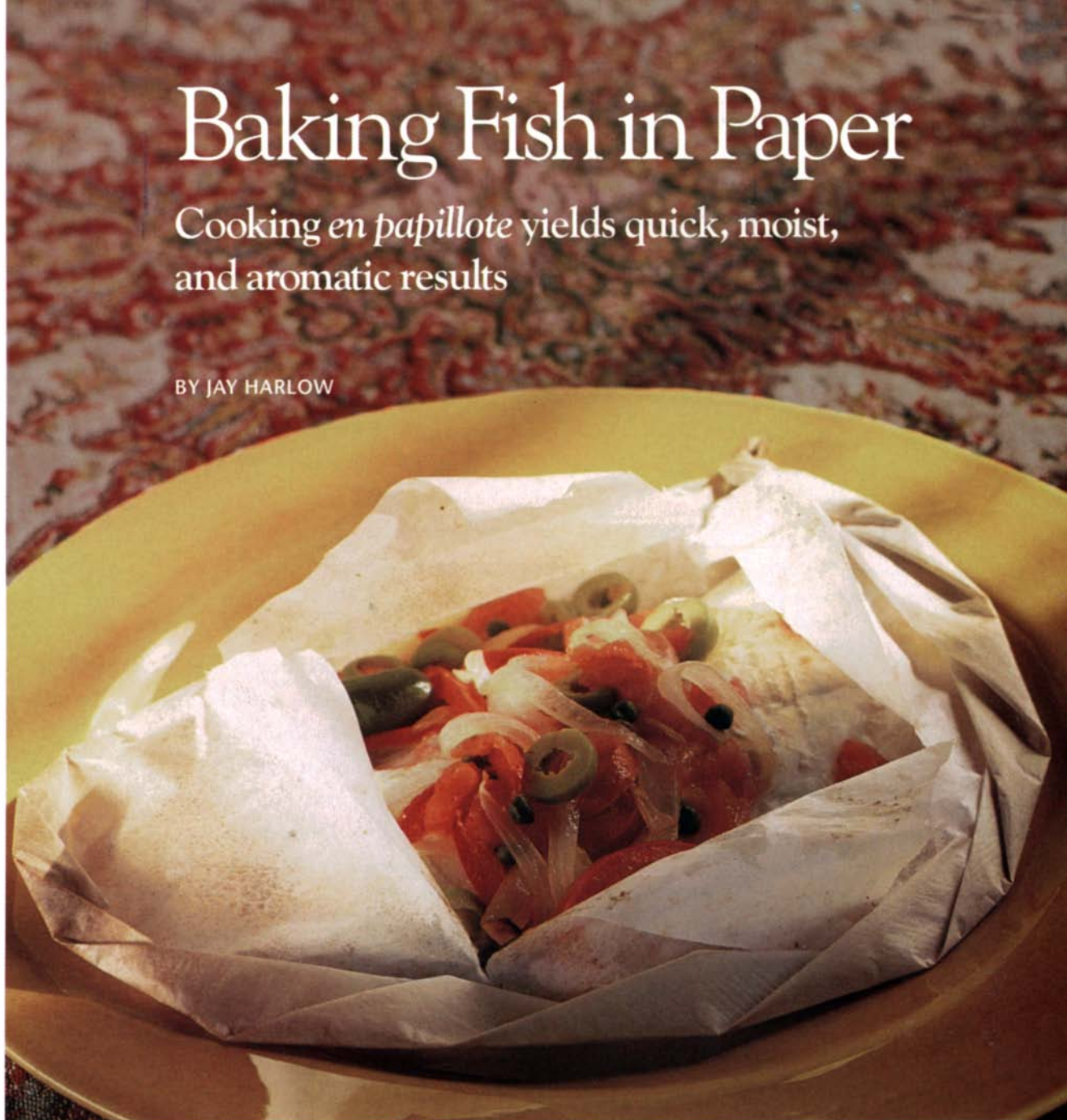


Baking Fish in Paper

Cooking *en papillote* yields quick, moist, and aromatic results

BY JAY HARLOW

Cooking in paper means drama at the table. While baking in paper is convenient, the extra appeal of fish en papillote comes from cutting open the paper, releasing the aroma, and eating the fish straight from the brown-edged parchment.



Baking fish in paper marries the convenience of baking with the speed of steaming. Enclosing each piece of fish in a small space with vegetables and seasonings creates a dish with its own sauce. It's hands-off cooking and a great way to get maximum flavor with little or no added fat. I've used this technique, also called baking *en papillote* (pronounced ahn PAH-pee-YOHT), both at home and in restaurant kitchens, and I find it's as useful for serving single portions as it is for dinner for ten.

In theory, the ingredients also could be cooked in aluminum foil instead of parchment. But I think baking in foil is slower than the almost instant transfer of oven heat through parchment. And aluminum foil cannot match the visual appeal of an oval envelope of parchment, browned and puffed from the steam within.

THE PROPER FISH FOR PAPER

The ideal thickness of fish for parchment baking is between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Fish this size will generally cook in 6 to 8 minutes, just right for getting the paper golden brown. Dense fish like monkfish, lingcod, and wolffish should be cut thinner so that it cooks in the same amount of time.

It's easiest to use a whole fillet; medium-size fish, such as tilapia and smaller red snapper or Pacific rockfish, yield single-serving fillets of an appropriate size. Larger fillets have to be cut into portions, and smaller fillets (from some flatfish) may have to be stacked to create the proper thickness. You can leave on the skin if you like, but be sure to scale the fish first. Freshwater fish other than farmed trout are generally better if skinned before cooking. Small fish of a half pound or less (trout, small mackerel, fresh sardines, and small

Kitchen origami



How to enclose fish in paper. Beginning at the lower left corner of the folded paper, fold in an inch or two to make a new folded edge, at an angle. Crease the new fold.



Hold down the middle of the fold as you lift the corner toward the center. Continue around the package.



With about six folds, you'll create a half oval. The final twist ensures the package will hold together.

Wrapping fish in parchment for baking isn't quite as exacting a process as Japanese decorative paper folding, but careful folding can make the difference between a tight package and one that leaks all over the baking sheet. Even with the most careful folding, the packages are not absolutely sealed, but they're tight enough to keep in most of the moisture and aroma of the food.

Traditional directions for folding parchment call for cutting the paper into a heart shape, but a rectangle or square will do the job nicely.

While kitchen parchment is available in roll form, I prefer using half of a 16x24-inch baking pan liner. Besides needing less cutting and measuring, the 16x12-inch rectangle is a perfect size for containing a generous portion of fish.

To enclose the fish, arrange it and any other fillings on the right side of the sheet and fold the other half over, creasing only the corners of the fold. Start by folding in an inch or two of the lower left corner. By doing this, you have created a new fold and a new corner (see top photo at left). Crease the new fold well.

Holding down the middle of the new fold with a fingertip, lift the new corner and fold it in toward the center of the package, creating yet another a new fold and a new corner. Crease again, move along another inch or

two, and repeat (see middle photo at left). At the corners of the sheet, a double fold may be needed to maintain the curved shape.

The length of the folds and the angles of the corners will vary, but with about six folds you'll create a fairly smooth half oval. Finish the last fold with a twist (see bottom photo at left) and carefully transfer the package to the baking sheet.

If you can't get your hands on a rectangular baking pan liner, a simple square of kitchen parchment works just as well. Tear off a square of paper from a 15-inch roll. This will create a slightly smaller package, but it works nicely as long as it fits the portion.

Fold the square in half on the diagonal, creasing only the corners. Open the paper, lay the fish and toppings to the right of the center, and fold the paper over the top. Starting with the corner closest to you, fold an inch or two of the corner over to meet the short edge of the triangle. Then continue with the same process of creasing the new fold and folding in the new corner.

The packages can be assembled up to four hours ahead of time and refrigerated. Remove them from the refrigerator at least 15 minutes before cooking so both the fish and the pan can come to room temperature.

A meal from a packet.
Wrap up cooked wild rice and sautéed mushrooms with a salmon fillet to steam, allowing the flavors to mingle. Open the packet, add a side dish, and dinner is served.



flatfish, for instance) can be cooked whole, on the bone. Gut and scale them, and cut off the heads and tails if necessary to fit the package.

The only fish I generally don't cook using this technique are "steak fish," such as swordfish, tuna, and shark, which are more suited to dry-heat cooking methods. Lean varieties, like snapper, rockfish, and most flatfish, can use a little butter or oil to enrich the sauce, while richer varieties (such as salmon and bluefish) provide plenty of fat on their own. Shellfish like shrimp or crabmeat are excellent for accenting mild-flavored fish.

OTHER GOOD THINGS IN THE PACKAGE

Additions to the package can range from a small quantity of aromatic flavorings to a sauce and vegetable topping—even cooked grains. Vegetables cooked in parchment must be cut in small pieces so that they're done in the short time it takes to cook fish fillets. Dense vegetables like carrots and celery should be cut into fine julienne; quicker-cooking varieties (summer squash, mushrooms, and onions, for instance) can be cut up to ¼ inch thick. Vegetables not suited to small slices, like asparagus, may need to be blanched.

Keep the moisture content of the vegetables in mind as well. Tomatoes release flavorful juices that become part of the sauce, but watery vegetables like summer squash can dilute the flavor of lean fish. To

reduce this effect, salt watery vegetables after cutting and let them sit for at least 15 minutes to release their water before you assemble the fish packages.

In parchment's moist baking environment, neither the fish nor the vegetables will brown noticeably. If you want a browned flavor or color, you'll have to achieve it before the vegetables go into the paper, by roasting peppers or sautéing onion slices.

ROLLS VS. SHEETS

Rolls of baking parchment are sold in cookware shops and some supermarkets, but they tend to be expensive. Much less expensive, but perhaps more difficult to obtain, are the large sheets of silicone-treated paper sold as baking pan liners in restaurant-supply and paper-supply houses. At about 16x24 inches, these sheets are sized to fit a commercial baker's sheet pan. A typical box of 1000 sheets, many years' supply for the home cook, sells for about \$35 in my area, which works out to less than 2 cents per serving. You also might ask a local bakery if they'll sell from their supply. If not, get a group of cooks to go in on a box or divide a package among friends who bake. For folding directions, see the sidebar at left.

BAKING THE PACKETS

These recipes are designed to bake in a 450°F oven, hot enough to cook as quickly as possible without



The benefits of hands-off cooking. Enclosing each piece of fish in parchment with vegetables and seasonings creates a “self-saucing” dish. (Here, it’s shellfish en papillote served over angel hair pasta.) It’s a great way to get maximum flavor with little or no added fat.

scorching the paper. Arrange the packages on a baking sheet with a rim to catch juices that might escape. If possible, allow a little space between the packages for the heat to reach all the fish evenly. However, a slight overlap of the paper edges is fine.

Depending on the thickness and density of the fish, cooking time will be 6 to 8 minutes. It isn’t practical to open a package and check for doneness, so learn to test through the paper using a skewer. Before cooking, poke a thin bamboo skewer or a toothpick into the thickest part of the fish, feeling for resistance. In raw fish, you can feel the point cutting its way through the muscle and connective tissue; in a fully cooked piece, it will slide in with little or no resistance. As the fish cooks, the uncooked zone in the center gets smaller. When there is just a trace of uncooked center, remove the fish from the heat. It will finish cooking in the next minute or two as the heat continues to penetrate the fish. Have the plates and

side dishes ready to go so the fish packages can move from oven to table as quickly as possible.

HOW TO SERVE A PIECE OF PAPER

Except in the most formal situations, part of the appeal of fish *en papillote* is cutting open the paper at the table. The simplest way is to peel back the top and eat the fish straight from the paper. Sharp-pointed steak knives make the job easier. If you don’t want to serve the fish in the paper, slit the edge of the package opposite the creases and slide the contents onto a plate. (The salmon and wild rice dish is an exception: it doesn’t slide out easily. If you don’t want to eat it from the paper, you’ll have to transfer it carefully to a plate.)

Most fish baked in parchment will generate a lot of liquid, which will mingle with and dilute any sauces on the plate. So while a heavily sauced side dish isn’t a good idea, a grain such as couscous is ideal for soaking up the flavorful juices.

BASIC LEMON & HERB FISH EN PAPILLOTE

Gremolata, a simple but delicious mixture of parsley, lemon zest, and garlic minced together, will work with anything from trout or sole fillets to mackerel or bluefish. Serves four.

3 Tbs. chopped parsley
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbs. minced lemon zest
4 scallions (both white and green parts)
1 to 1½ lb. fish fillet, in four equal portions
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 Tbs. lemon juice
3 Tbs. softened butter (optional)

Heat the oven to 450°F.

To make the *gremolata*, mince the parsley, garlic, and lemon zest together. Set aside.

Cut the scallions into 2-in. lengths and slice them lengthwise. Season the fish with salt, pepper, and lemon juice, and spread the top with butter, if desired.

Divide the scallions among four sheets of parchment, top each with a portion of fish, and top the fish with a portion of *gremolata*. Seal the packages (see the sidebar, on p. 52) and bake on a sheet pan until puffy and browned, about 8 min.

MIXED SHELLFISH EN PAPILLOTE

Serve with rice, couscous, or pasta to absorb the abundant, flavorful juices. Serves four.

Pinch saffron threads

¼ cup dry white wine

1 to 1½ lb. assorted shellfish—

choose three or four of the following:

- ♦ raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ♦ scallops, whole if small, halved if large
- ♦ clams or oysters, shucked
- ♦ mussels, steamed open and shucked
- ♦ crab meat

1 cup peeled, seeded, and chopped tomatoes

¼ cup chopped scallions (white part only)

Zest of 1 lemon, minced

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Crumble the saffron threads into the wine and set aside in a warm place for ½ hour or so, until the wine turns yellow. Heat the oven to 450°.

Divide the shellfish among four sheets of parchment. Moisten with the saffron-flavored wine and top with tomatoes, scallions, lemon zest, and a little salt and pepper. Seal the packages (see the sidebar on p. 52) and bake on a sheet pan until puffy and browned, about 8 min.

SALMON, WILD RICE & MUSHROOMS EN PAPILLOTE

Experiment with various wild and cultivated mushrooms. You also might try a blend of wild rice and fragrant long-grain brown rice varieties. Serves four.

2 Tbs. butter

4 scallions (white part only), minced

1 clove garlic, minced

½ lb. button mushrooms, in thick slices

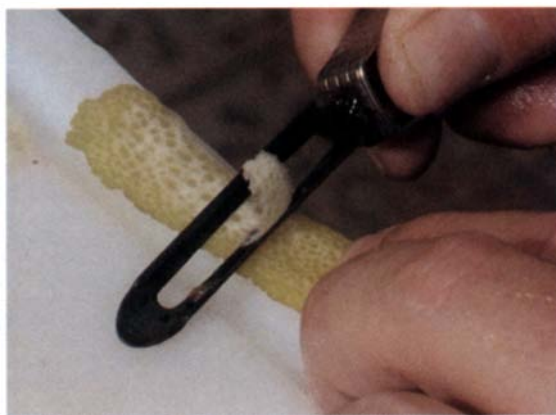
½ lb. oyster mushrooms, thick stems removed,
caps split lengthwise if large

1 tsp. minced savory or ¼ tsp. crumbled dried savory

2 cups cooked, cooled wild rice or a blend of wild
rice and fragrant brown rice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

4 pieces salmon fillet, 4 to 6 oz. each



All zest, no pith.

Here's an easy way to get the lemon zest you need for the Basic Lemon & Herb recipe. Use a vegetable peeler to remove strips of lemon peel. Turn the peel over and stroke the blade up the inside length of the peel to remove the bitter white pith.

Heat the oven to 450°.

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. When the foam subsides, add the scallions and garlic and cook until fragrant. Add the mushrooms and savory and cook, stirring or shaking the pan, until the mushrooms have rendered a lot of liquid. Turn the heat to high and cook until the liquid is nearly evaporated. Season the mushrooms to taste and set aside to cool.

Spread ½ cup of the rice on one side of a sheet of parchment. Lay a portion of fish over the rice and top with a quarter of the mushrooms. Repeat with the remaining portions. Seal the packages (see the sidebar on p. 52) and bake on a sheet pan until puffy and browned, about 8 min. Serve in the papers or carefully transfer the contents to a dinner plate.

PIQUANT SNAPPER OR ROCKFISH

The light, tart sauce for this dish takes just moments to make. If you fear spiciness, omit the jalapeño pepper. Serves four.

2 Tbs. olive oil

1 medium onion, sliced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned

1 Tbs. chopped garlic

2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped coarse
(or a 14-oz. can peeled tomatoes, drained and chopped)

1½ to 2 lb. snapper or Pacific rockfish fillet

Juice of 1 lemon or lime

Salt to taste

¼ cup sliced green olives

1 Tbs. capers

4 pickled jalapeño or serrano chiles

Heat the oven to 450°.

Heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the onion, pepper, garlic, and tomatoes just until softened but not browned. (If using canned tomatoes, add them to the sauce after the onion and pepper are soft.) Simmer the sauce until most of the liquid is evaporated. Set aside to cool.

As the sauce cools, divide the fillet into four equal portions. Sprinkle with lemon or lime juice and salt. Put each portion on a sheet of parchment and top with a generous portion of the sauce. Add the olives, capers, and one chile to each portion. Seal the packages (see the sidebar on p. 52) and bake on a sheet pan oven until puffy and browned, about 8 min.

Jay Harlow is a former restaurant chef, a seafood columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, and the author of ten cookbooks. He lives in California's Bay Area. ♦

Hand-Crafted Salamis

An experienced sausage-maker shares his methods

BY DAVID GINGRASS

Ever since cooking school, I've been passionate about the dried sausage that the French call *saucisson sec*, or hard salami. But I had only a vague idea of how to make these salamis, and there was little written about the craft. I experimented, with mixed results. Fortunately, I found a sausage shop in Los Angeles run by some old-world Austrians. I hung around the kitchen, doing my best to stay out of their way. I began bringing them my work for critique and my salami got better; in fact, now it's really quite delicious. I've learned that, with a bit of practice and some passion, anyone can make delicious hard salami.

Simply put, hard salami is ground or cubed meat that is cured with salts, blended with flavorings, stuffed into casings, fermented, and allowed to dry. The brief fermentation gives the salami its tangy flavor, and drying the sausage makes it firmer, more flavorful, and less perishable. Making salami is a perfect project for the home cook because it can be dried in most basements and it keeps almost indefinitely. Of course, this means that there's always some wonderful salami hanging around, but I never grow tired of eating a few slices with good bread and a glass of wine.

GRANDMA'S GRINDER AND A CLEAN BASEMENT

Hard salami can be prepared in any clean, cool kitchen. It's true that sausage-making takes some special equipment, but you may already have some of what's required. You'll need a sharp knife, a large cutting board, an accurate scale, and two half-gallon food-grade plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.

You'll need a meat grinder, which has to be chilled before grinding the meat. Almost any kind, manual or electric, will work well as long as the blade is sharp and the plates are free of scratches. Tin-coated metal grinders are best because they'll stay cold while grind-

A little bit of mold is good. These black-peppercorn salamis are at the end of the drying period and can now be kept almost indefinitely in the refrigerator.



ing; this helps prevent fat in the meat from smearing. Plastic grinders, like those that can be attached to home mixers, aren't robust enough for salami-making and don't hold the cold. A hand-operated metal grinder that clamps in place, much like the kind your grandmother probably used, is best for home use. A variety of grinding plates is also helpful.

A stationary mixer that's able to handle at least five pounds of cold ground meat without overheating will also make things much easier. Use a paddle attachment if your mixer is strong enough; a dough hook if it isn't. You can mix the meat by hand in a metal bowl with a strong steel spoon, but this takes a lot of energy.

A good sausage stuffer is a worthwhile purchase. There are tube attachments for grinders, but the grinder can overmix and overheat the meat. I've used these attachments and had varying degrees of success, so I suggest using them only as a last resort. Stuffers that employ a piston to extrude the meat work the best and cost about \$85.

I dry my salami in the wine cellar at the restaurant, but salami can be dried in most home basements. Be sure the area is clean and free of pests. You'll need dowels or hooks to hang the sausages, a simple humidistat to gauge the moisture in the air, and a thermometer. The proper temperature for drying sausages is between 50° and 60°F. Relative humidity should stay between 75% and 80%. The ideal conditions are 58° at 78% relative humidity. You can aim a small fan at the sausages if the drying room becomes too humid, or use a humidifier if it becomes too dry. If the humidity is too low, the sausages will dry too quickly and become "case-hardened"; that is, the surface of the salami becomes so dry and hard that no further moisture can escape. Salami that has case-hardened will be soft and mushy in the inside and very hard on the outside. If this happens, there's no way to reverse the effect, and it's best to throw out the salami and start over.

IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS

The ingredients you'll need to make salami are few, so each one should be of top quality. The herbs and spices you choose should be fresh and full of flavor, as their flavor will need to stay potent through weeks of drying.

Don't cheat on the meat. The most important ingredient in sausage-making is the meat. Use high-quality meat, avoiding fatty scraps and trimmings. I use pork butt, a cut of pork from above the shoulder that has a good ratio of fat to lean—about one part fat to three parts lean. The pork butt should be boneless and trimmed of any gristle, bone chips, or other blemishes. You can buy fresh meat to use immediately or frozen meat, which you can thaw the night before you plan to start.

Salt is the cure. You'll need two kinds of salt to make dried sausages, common salt (sodium chloride) and curing salt. Together they preserve, bind, and fla-

vor the meat. I use kosher salt instead of table salt because it is larger grained and purer. You can buy curing salt from meat processing companies or through mail-order suppliers (see sources below). Some curing salts contain only sodium nitrite; others are a mix of sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate. For hard salami, you'll need the latter. This compound curing salt is often called "Prague powder" and is tinted pink so it won't be mistaken for common salt. (For a discussion of sodium nitrite and nitrate, see Letters, *Fine Cooking* #4.)

Curing salt usually comes chemically bound onto a common salt carrier, but I like to dilute it even more. Accuracy is important, so measure the salts by weight. I weigh them each separately and then mix them. I call this blend the curing mix. For a truly accurate curing mix, it's best to make enough for 100 pounds of meat and then divide the total weight of the mixture by the weight of the meat called for in the recipe. This greatly reduces the effect of any error that may occur on the scale.

CULTIVATE SOME GOOD GERMS

Lactobacilli bacteria (the same friendly bacteria that are in yogurt and sourdough bread) produce the lactic acid that gives salami a tangy flavor. These bacteria feed on simple sugars, so you'll need to add corn syrup to the sausage mixture. I use light corn syrup



SOURCES FOR INGREDIENTS & EQUIPMENT

Check the Yellow Pages for local meat processors and distributors, which often carry supplies for making sausage and salami and for curing meat.

The Sausage Maker (26 Military Rd., Buffalo, NY 14207; 716/876-5521) will ship everything from curing salts and casings to stuffers and grinders. Free catalog.

Slice the salami super-thin. Take your time and slice it properly for a more tender texture and a cleaner, brighter flavor.



Measure the salts carefully to make a proper curing mix. Many curing salts are tinted pink to prevent any cases of mistaken identity.



Uniform cubes of meat ensure an even cure. The author carefully mixes the pork and curing salts before refrigerating for a week-long cure.



Keep the meat cold for a nicely textured sausage. The author grinds the meat with a cold metal grinder directly into a chilled stainless-steel bowl. The fat in cold meat won't "smear," so that the protein will easily bind together.

because the bacteria can digest it completely, leaving no residual sweetness in the salami.

Getting the lactobacilli into your sausage can be tricky. We had enough of these useful bacteria in the kitchen where I was the chef, so fermentation just happened. The bacteria may have come from a few sausages a friend brought back from France or from the sourdough starters we used to make our bread. You can buy starter culture, or you can chance having the proper helpers already in your kitchen. After

making a few batches of salami at home, it's likely that the bacteria will take up residence in your kitchen, too.

Hard salami can be made with herbs, spices, and other flavorings. I prefer savory herbs, such as thyme and sage, rather than sweeter herbs, like basil. Ginger and garlic are my favorite vegetable flavorings. While ginger isn't a traditional flavoring in this type of sausage, I like the clean, snappy flavor that it adds to salami. Black peppercorns are a good spice to start with because their pungent tang is a great complement to the slightly sour, fermented flavors in the salami.

Experiment by adding just one new flavor at a time to a recipe you like. Simple spicing combinations are best because they develop into full, complex flavors as the salami dries. Be careful of flavorings that contain any sort of acid (lemon juice, for example); they make for a dry, crumbly salami. Acid denatures the protein, essentially cooking the meat inside the casing.

WRAP IT UP

The casing, into which the cured, seasoned meat is stuffed, determines the size and shape of the finished salami. Three types of casings are available: collagen, synthetic, and natural. Collagen casings are made from processed animal protein and are extruded into a perfectly uniform shape. Synthetic casings are made of plastic which, for dried sausages, are lined with protein so they'll shrink along with the meat. If you're using synthetic casings, you'll probably need to soak them for a minute in warm water to make them flexible.

I prefer natural casings, which are made from cleaned sheep, hog, or beef intestines. Natural casings are packed in salt or in a salt solution to preserve them and they must be refrigerated. Natural casings will keep for several weeks, but they become weak as they age. Before you use natural casings, run water through them to clean out the salt solution and to give them a stretch. Natural casings have a distinctive odor, but this will fade away as the sausages dry. Regardless of the casing you choose, you'll need thick, food-grade butcher's twine to tie the ends of the casing closed.

BLACK-PEPPERCORN SALAMI

When making your first batch of salami, it's best not to get carried away with the seasonings. This recipe has lots of flavor, yet is simply spiced. *Yields about 5 pounds.*

10 lb. boneless pork butt
3 oz. curing mix (see note at right)
4 oz. corn syrup
1½ oz. very coarsely ground black pepper
½ oz. minced garlic
1 oz. minced fresh ginger
Lactobacilli starter culture (optional; check package for amount)
Beef middle casings, 3½-in. protein-lined fibrous synthetic casings, or similar collagen casings



Salami needs a cool, damp place to dry. The ideal conditions, reported by this combination thermometer/humidistat, are approximately 58°F at 78% relative humidity.

Note: For the curing mix, weigh 26 oz. of kosher salt and 4 oz. of curing salt (this proportion may vary slightly by salt supplier, so always read the curing salt package carefully). This will yield 30 oz. of curing mix—enough for 100 lb. of meat. So, for this recipe, which calls for 10 lb. of meat, you'll need exactly 3 oz. of curing mix. Divide this amount between the lean and the fat, according to their weight.

CUBING AND CURING

The meat is easiest to cut when firm, so put it in the freezer for an hour before you start to work. Be sure to keep your hands, equipment, and all work surfaces scrupulously clean. A weak solution of chlorine bleach, followed by thorough rinsing, does the job nicely.

I like to cube and cure the large fat layer of the pork butt separately from the rest of the pork, which will be ground. This gives the finished salami its distinctive coarse appearance. Curing the meat and fat separately means that you will have to weigh each batch and accurately divide the curing mix accordingly.

Cut away the fat covering from the pork butt, and then cut the lean into 1-in. cubes and the fat into ½-in. cubes. Spread them out on separate baking sheets and put the sheets in the freezer until the meat and fat become slightly icy and almost frozen. This hardens the fat and helps prevent "smearing," which occurs when the protein molecules in the meat become so surrounded by fat that they cannot bind together.

With your hands, thoroughly work the curing mix into the lean to ensure even distribution. Pack the salted lean into a plastic container, pressing down to eliminate air bubbles, as contact with air causes the meat to oxidize and discolor. Smooth a layer of plastic wrap against the meat to prevent as much oxidation as possible. Repeat the procedure with the fat, packing it into a separate container. Seal each container with a tight-fitting lid and refrigerate at 34° to 38° for a week.

GRINDING AND MIXING

After a week's cure in the refrigerator, the lean should be firmer than before, redder in color, and the cubes should stick together. If these changes are not apparent, or if the meat has an off odor, it's best to discard it and begin again.

Before you begin to grind and mix the pork, wash and chill the grinding and mixing tools.

Leave the cubes of fat for gamish in the freezer while you grind the lean through a ¼-in. plate. Put the ground lean and the cubed fat in the chilled bowl of your electric

mixer and combine on medium speed. Add the corn syrup, seasonings, and starter culture, if you're using it. Continue mixing until the meat becomes firm and slightly springy to the touch. It should wobble easily when you gently shake the mixing bowl. Keep the mixture refrigerated until you're ready to stuff the casings.

STUFFING AND TYING

Thoroughly clean the sausage stuffer, cool it in cold water, and then dry it. Attach the stuffing tube that's closest in size to your casings. If you're using natural casings, untangle a length, slip one end over the kitchen faucet, and flush it until the water runs clear. (Keep the drain closed or your casing will quickly slip out of sight.) Drain the casing and cut it into desired lengths. If you're using synthetic or collagen casings, soak them first before tying them. Some suppliers sell synthetic casings that have already been cut to size and have one end clamped shut, but it's just as easy to tie both ends shut using the method below.

Tie one end of the casing closed using the double-knot method shown in the photos at right and cut off the excess string. Put the open end of the casing over the stuffing tube and gently slide the rest of the casing onto the tube. Put the chilled meat into the sausage stuffer and slowly push the meat into the casing. Fill the casing completely to help prevent air pockets, being careful not to burst it. Gently prick any air pockets with a pin. Leave about an inch of casing unstuffed, pinch it closed, and then tie it, again using the double-knot method. It's important to tie secure knots. I learned the hard way when I walked into the cellar to find that all my precious salamis had slipped their knots and were lying in a heap on the floor.

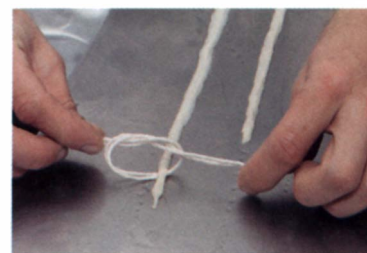
WAIT PATIENTLY WHILE THE SAUSAGES DRY

Hang the sausages in your chosen drying area, making sure the temperature and humidity are in check. If the humidity is high for a few days, especially at the beginning, mold may appear on the sausages. If the mold is heavy, lower the humidity and wipe the mold from the sausages with some diluted distilled vinegar.

Fermentation is usually finished within the first two to three days. I like to taste the first sample of salami at two weeks, when it's slightly dried, soft, and silky in texture. If you like a harder salami, you can continue to dry them for another couple of weeks. When they have reached the firmness you want, refrigerate them. These sausages keep for many months, but it isn't likely they'll be around that long.



David Gingrass and his wife Anne are the founding co-chefs at Postrio Restaurant in San Francisco. They plan to open their own restaurant there this summer. ♦



Tying the knot. About an inch from the end of the casing, tie a knot with a double length of heavy cotton butcher's twine and pull tight.



Pull the short flap of the casing open.



Tie another simple knot across this, pulling the knot tight. Trim the two loose ends of twine, leaving the loop.

Hold the casing firmly in place. The salami should be tightly packed and free of air pockets after stuffing.



The Bread Machine and the Art of Baking

You'll be surprised what this mixer, kneader, proofer, and oven can do

BY MARCY GOLDMAN

I'm a baker. So when bread machines hit the market several years ago, I was amused. Almost all bakers I know are dedicated to a hands-on approach. What attraction could a machine have when all you do is dump ingredients into a box and wake up in the morning to a tall, mushroom-shaped loaf? I thought bread machines might follow in the path of fondue pots and electric peeling wands.

But I was curious, too, and decided to give bread machines a try—if only to keep current, I told myself. As I evaluated a number of brands, I quickly discovered that home-style loaves, once a weekend project, were literally child's play in a bread machine. By winter, I was putting on a great pot of soup and timing the bread machine to produce a mouthwatering loaf just about the same time the soup was done and my sons' school bus turned the corner.

And I didn't stop with just bread from "the box." I could make the machine work for me to mix, knead, and proof doughs for breads that required more of an artisan's touch. March brought warm batches of spicy hot cross buns and staying rounds of Irish potato bread. Meanwhile, baking friends would remark that I had sold out as a baker, to which I would respond, "But when was the last time you actually made bread at home?"

While machine-mixed and -baked bread is a quantum leap from your great-

grandmother's farm loaf, it happens to taste rather good, and it's as nutritious as you care to make it. In these hectic times, the reward of accepting innovation, however countercraftsman it may seem, is to experience homemade, hot, fresh bread whenever you want it.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A BREAD MACHINE?

A bread machine in its simplest form is an impressive combination of computer, mixer, dough kneader, proofing box, miniature oven, and digital alarm clock. It's somewhat larger than a breadbox, most often a white molded unit that houses a vertical bread pan where all the magic takes place. Inside the bread pan is a kneading blade, which works like the dough hook of a stationary mixer. You literally plunk ingredients into the pan in a prescribed order. For most machines, liquids go in first, followed by flour, with the yeast sprinkled on top. These ingredients are incorporated by the blade into a shaggy mass, which eventually forms a ball of dough that's pummeled against the sides and bottom of the pan until properly kneaded.

Timed by electronics, the kneading blade then stops and lets the dough rest and rise (proof). Then one or two brisk revolutions of this industrious blade knocks the dough down again to rise for a final time. During these first stages, the machine's cavity is heated slightly to create a moist, warm haven for proofing the dough. As the dough comes to the end of its final rise, an electric coil in the machine's interior heats up to an appropriate temperature for baking. The risen

bread, supported by the vertical bread pan and the gases within the dough, bakes to completion. All you have to do is open the lid of the bread machine and lift out the bread pan containing a hot, golden loaf. You can have bread three to four hours from starting the machine, or use the timer so that the bread is ready when you wake up in the morning.

Throughout the process, you're free to look inside and poke and pinch the dough to make sure the texture is right—just keep your fingers clear of the kneading blade when it's moving. While it's mixing and kneading, you can make slight adjustments to the dough by adding a touch more flour or water.

IS MACHINE BREAD GOOD?

Baked vertically, the straight-sided, tall "machine" bread is perfect for brown-bagging, morning toast, and open-faced treats. Aside from a domed top, these loaves look much like any long loaf of bread you might buy. The crusts are generally crisp but tender, and the inside texture is notably light and feathery.

A NEAT AND EFFICIENT KNEADER AND PROOFER

If you want crunchier crusts, more hearty or varied textures, or different shapes of bread, then consider using the bread machine to produce proofed dough that you handle and bake traditionally. Most bread machines have a "dough program," in which dough is mixed, kneaded, and allowed to rise in its humid and warm home. A beeper signals that the dough program is completed. You can then shape the proofed dough by hand into rolls, loaves, breadsticks, or any form you

Bread machines make more than just sandwich loaves. They're also great for kneading and proofing dough for breads like chewy breadsticks (above left), zataar-topped flatbread (bottom), and a triple-hump loaf (at right).



Let the machine do the mixing, and then remove the dough to make hand-shaped bread or pizza.



This hearty, crusty French country loaf started in a bread machine. Even doughs made with a yeasty "sponge" can be mixed, kneaded, and proofed in the machine.

wish and bake it in the oven (see the recipes on pp. 63–64).

How does making dough in a bread machine differ from using a stationary mixer with a dough hook? First, the bread machine is an enclosed container, so a floury, messy kitchen is never a deterrent to an afternoon's baking. Second, a bread machine is the perfect proofer for doughs—warm, moist, and draft-free.

No, I won't abandon hand-kneading doughs, nor will I chuck my adored stationary mixer, which does larger batches of dough. But when making bagels or rolls that take a lot of handling, getting a head start by having the dough made for you is a boon. Dough for pizza, focaccia, breadsticks, and hard rolls emerges regularly from my bread machine. I've reached a point in my baking career

where I just don't need to prepare each and every dough by hand.

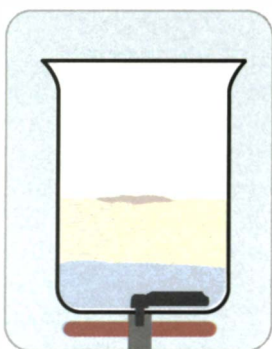
Good incubator for sponges, too.

Most recently, my machine has become the cradle for bubbling sponge starters that get turned into crusty French country loaves (see photo above and recipe at right). I mix a slurry of flour, water, and yeast and let it sit and froth overnight in the bread machine, cover down. This creates a sponge that will give the finished bread a more robust character, with a chewier texture and a crunchier crust. The next day, I add more flour and yeast and let the machine knead the dough and give it a short rise. Then I take it out of the machine and let it rise more slowly on the counter or in the refrigerator. I shape it by hand and give it a brisk, hot bake in a steamy oven.

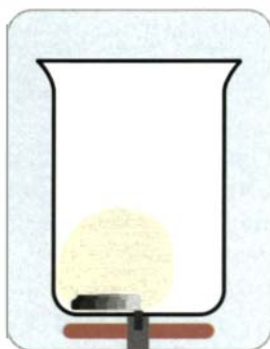
BREAD MACHINES DEMAND CAREFUL MEASUREMENTS

Bread machines are quite exceptional, but they're unforgiving of cavalier measuring. You must remember to measure accurately and to add ingredients *in the order* the manufacturer stipulates. If you add too much yeast to a bread dough baked in a regular oven, you'll get a slightly higher and yeastier-tasting bread—not terrific, but acceptable. This type of error in a bread machine, however, can result in the dough rising and collapsing as it collides with the lid of the unit, or fusing itself to the lid as it bakes. Too much sugar or fat can also cause a loaf to cave in. However, used properly, and with some experience, you can easily turn out a wide range of tasty loaves with a bread machine.

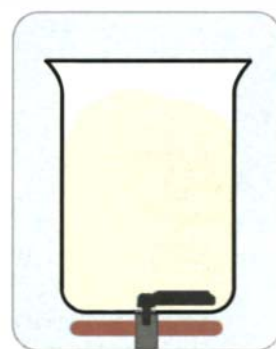
WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE



1 *All the ingredients go in at once. Liquids, flour, and yeast go into the bread pan in the order specified by the manufacturer.*



2 *A whirling blade mixes and kneads the dough. The blade spins around on the bottom of the bread pan, kneading the dough to develop gluten.*



3 *Dough rises in its warm and humid home. The machine heats up slightly so there's no need to search for a warm spot for the dough to rise.*

FRENCH COUNTRY BREAD

The combined effort of bread machine and time make a loaf with a robust flavor and a crust that is at once crusty and chewy. *Makes one loaf.*

FOR THE SPONGE:

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup warm (105 to 115°F) water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. active dry yeast
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ oz. ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) unbleached all-purpose flour
1 Tbs. whole-wheat flour
1 tsp. rye flour

FOR THE BREAD:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
1 Tbs. honey
1 tsp. active dry yeast
13 to 15 oz. (3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups) unbleached bread flour

*Cornmeal or semolina for baking
Flour or bran flakes for finishing (optional)*

Make the sponge—Put the water and yeast in the bread machine pan and let stand a few minutes. Add the flours. Set the machine on the dough program and let the kneading blade mix the ingredients into a batter-like glob, about 3 min., and then unplug the machine. (You can also mix the sponge in a bowl and then put it in the machine.) Let the sponge proof for 4 to 16 hours. It should look bubbly and smell yeasty.

Make the bread—Add the bread ingredients using the lower amount of flour to the proofed sponge and reset the machine to the dough program. After the dough has been kneaded for 5 min. check its texture—it should be soft and springy. (Be sure to keep your fingers out of the way of the blade.) If the dough is sticky, add more flour, 1 Tbs. at a time.

When the dough program has finished (the dough has risen once), remove the dough and put it in a greased bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let it rise at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours, or up to 12 hours in the refrigerator.



Breadsticks are a snap when you make the dough in a bread machine. Roll out the dough and coat it with a flavorful topping like Parmesan cheese and caraway seeds (above) or zataar spice mix (recipe on p. 64). Cut the dough into strips with a pizza cutter, fold each strip in half, and give it a couple of twists before baking.

If the dough has been refrigerated, let it come to room temperature. Punch down the dough and shape it into a ball. Line a 10-in.-diameter basket or bowl with a floured dish-towel. Gently put the ball of dough inside, smoothest side down. Lightly oil the top of the dough and cover with a thin dishtowel. Let it rise again until the ball is puffy and almost doubled, which will take anywhere from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Heat oven to 450°F. Sprinkle a baking sheet with the cornmeal or semolina. Gently invert the ball of dough onto the baking sheet. If you like, slash the loaf with a razor blade and sprinkle it with some flour or bran flakes.

Spray the oven with a few spritzes of water from a spray bottle and put the bread on the lowest rack in the oven. For the first 15 min. of baking, spray the oven walls every few minutes. This seems tedious, but it will give the bread an incredible crust.

Reduce the heat to 425° and bake until well browned, about 30 to 35 min. in total. The loaf should sound hollow when rapped on the bottom. Cool well on a rack before slicing.

TRIPLE-HUMP LOAF

Knead and proof this appealing loaf in a bread machine and then bake it in a loaf pan in the oven. *Makes one 9-inch loaf.*

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
2 Tbs. milk
2 Tbs. vegetable or olive oil
1 Tbs. sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
16 oz. ($3\frac{2}{3}$ cups) unbleached white bread flour
2 tsp. active dry yeast or $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. rapid-rise yeast

*Cornmeal for baking
Flour for finishing*

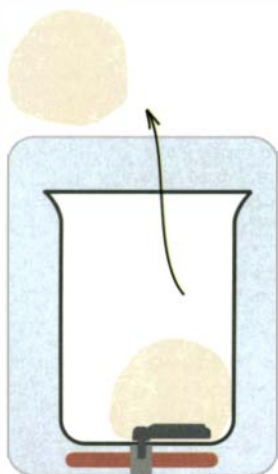
Put the dough ingredients in the bread pan in the order specified by the manufacturer. Turn the machine on to the dough program.

Heat the oven to 425°.

When the dough program has finished, remove the dough and cut the dough into three even sections. Shape each piece into a smooth oval.

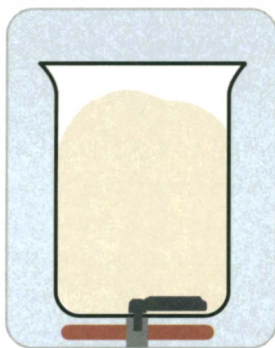
Lightly grease a 9x5-in. loaf pan with butter or shortening and sprinkle some cornmeal on the bottom. Put the three pieces of dough side by side in the pan. Sprinkle 1 Tbs. flour on top.

Allow the bread to rise until it's almost flush



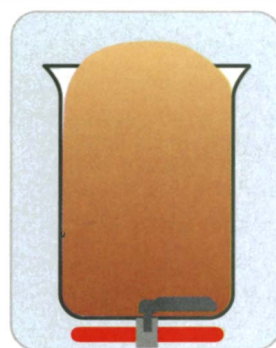
4

Take out the dough at this point for pizza or oven-baked bread.



5

For machine-baked bread, the dough rises again before baking.



6

The heating element turns the bread machine into an oven, and the loaf bakes until it is golden brown.

Bread-machine features

Competition is fierce among bread-machine manufacturers, and consumers are reaping the rewards. There are many machines to choose from, with more consistent performance and better overall pricing. You can expect to pay \$150 to \$500, depending on what features the machine has and what sort of a deal you get.

While no machine is perfect, small faults are usually buoyed up by some nice features. The only machines I suggest you avoid are the ones in which the bread pan has a hole in the bottom. With these, you must fit the pan in the machine before filling it, which can be messy and inconvenient.

In essence, it's no longer which machine you buy, it's what you do with it when you get it home. But how do you decide which one is right for you?

SIZE

Most bread machines have a bread pan that holds a 1½-pound loaf, but 1-pound units are available and more 2-pound-capacity bread machines are coming on the market. I recommend at least a 1½-pound model, even for small households. With the extra capacity of a larger machine, you don't have to worry about making a stubby loaf that's not enough to go around or a skimpy batch of pizza dough.

VIEWING WINDOW

Some machines have a viewing window, and it's reflected in a higher price. I like a window because I can peer in and see if the dough needs a flour or water adjustment. It's also great if you have kids around, for whom bread-machine baking is a sideshow. You can, however, lift the lid and peek in while the dough is kneading and rising, so a window isn't essential.

DOUGH PROGRAM

On this setting, the machine kneads and proofs dough but doesn't bake it. It's a must if you want to use your machine creatively.

RAPID-RISE PROGRAM

Most machines bake bread in about four hours. A rapid-rise program shaves off an hour but delivers a shorter, denser loaf. It's handy if you're short on time but still want hot bread to serve.

WHOLE-WHEAT PROGRAM

A whole-wheat program simply gives a heavier and more sluggish whole-wheat dough the extra time it needs to rise. If you plan to make 100% whole-wheat bread frequently, this option is important; however, doughs made with up to 50% whole-wheat flour do fine with the regular program.

RAISIN PROGRAM

The kneading blade in a bread machine tends to mince raisins if they're added too early. A raisin program usually means that a beeper sounds to signal when to add the raisins or other additional ingredients.

CRUST CONTROL

This option lets you fine-tune the crust color depending on the recipe. Machines without this control usually turn out loaves with medium- to light-colored crusts.

KEEP-WARM OR COOL-DOWN FAN

If you're not around to take the finished bread out of its pan immediately after baking, it sweats and its crisp crust turns soggy. Some models have a cool-down fan to buy you some time, while others blow hot air to keep the bread warm for a couple of hours.

with the top of the pan, about 30 to 40 min.

Put the pan in the oven, reduce the heat to 400°, and bake 25 to 30 min., until the crust is golden brown and the loaf makes a hollow sound when rapped on the bottom. Let it cool 5 min. before removing it from the pan, and cool well before slicing

ZATAAR FLATBREAD OR BREADSTICKS

You can find *zataar* in well-stocked spice stores, or you can mix it up at home. *Makes two flatbreads or two dozen breadsticks.*

Dough from Triple-Hump Loaf (see recipe on p. 63), substituting water for the milk
2 Tbs. vegetable oil, for brushing the pan
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, for brushing the dough

¼ cup zataar spice mix (see recipe below)

Heat the oven to 475°. Line two baking sheets with kitchen parchment and brush with the vegetable oil.

To make flatbreads—Divide the dough in half and roll one piece into a 12-in. round on a lightly floured surface. Allow the dough to relax if it's too elastic to roll out easily. Transfer it to one of the baking sheets, brush with half of the olive oil, then sprinkle a few tablespoons of the *zataar* spice mix on top. Repeat with the second piece of dough. Bake until they brown and blister, 8 to 10 min. You can serve the bread hot, warm, or cold, either cut into wedges or torn into rough pieces.

To make breadsticks—Roll the dough into a 12x16-in. rectangle that's ¼ in. thick. Brush the dough with the olive oil and sprinkle on the spice mix. Gently press the spices into the dough.

Using a pizza wheel or a long knife, cut the dough into long strips ½ in. wide. Pick up a strip, gently stretch it, and then fold it in half. Holding each end, twist the dough three or four times and then put it on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the rest of the strips. Bake until golden brown, 12 to 15 min.

ZATAAR SPICE MIX

Yields 1¼ cups.

2 tsp. ground dried oregano
2 tsp. dried oregano leaves
2 Tbs. ground dried thyme
1 tsp. dried thyme leaves
2 tsp. ground dried savory
2 tsp. ground dried marjoram
½ tsp. dried marjoram leaves
1 Tbs. sumac (optional)
½ cup sesame seeds
1½ tsp. salt
Zest of 2 lemons, minced very fine

Toss all the ingredients together until thoroughly mixed. Stored in an airtight container, it will keep for several weeks.

Marcy Goldman, a graduate of l'Institut de tourisme et hôtellerie de Québec, is a baker, pastry chef, and writer living in Montreal. ♦



Bright colors, subtle flavors. Edible flowers come in a broad range of sizes and shapes. They include day lilies, snapdragons, Johnny-jump-ups, pansies, roses, and lavender flowers.

Cooking with Flowers

Edible flowers add one-of-a-kind flavor, color, and texture

BY ELENA MARCHESO MORENO

People who love to cook and create in their kitchens often have equal passion for their gardens. Yet few who pluck flowers for the dining table think of serving flowers on dinner plates. These folks miss out on a lot of sensory impact. A simple dish becomes still-life material with the addition of a few edible flowers. Flower flavors range from spicy to, well, flowery, and even their scents can contribute to a dish. The shapes and textures of edible flowers are a virtue unto themselves; they can be smooth or rough, flat or curved, ruffled or spiked.

THE FLORAL HARVEST

From early spring to late summer, if you have a bit of soil to till or even a window box, you can grow edible

flowers. All it takes is a little planning. Seeds for edible flowers are available at many garden shops (see sources on p. 67). Some of the easiest types to find are highly scented varieties of common garden flowers, such as roses, lilacs, and violets. Treat the flowers you grow with the same respect you would any food-bearing plant: don't use chemicals.

Even without a garden, it's easy to plan a meal around colorful blossoms. Most fine food stores have access to fresh flowers. If the flowers you want are not in stock, merchants can sometimes special-order them within a few days; however, not all flowers are available year-round, except perhaps in California.

Ironically, the flower shop is one of the worst sources for edible flowers. Edible flowers must be

grown without pesticides and specifically for consumption; florists' products aren't organically grown, and many are sprayed with preservatives.

When choosing edible flowers, fragrance means flavor. Pick flowers that have almost reached their peak, when their colors are bright and their petals firm. To prevent wilting, gather them in the cool morning. Only flowers to be dried for teas or seasonings, such as calendula or lavender, should be picked in the heat of the day, when they are free of dew. Wash the blossoms thoroughly, but gently, under a slow stream of cool water. Drain and store them between layers of paper towels in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them. Flowers are best eaten the day you pick them.

NOT ALL FLOWERS ARE EDIBLE

Edible flowers are a joy, but free-range grazing from your garden, even if it's organic, is not a good idea. Some flowers are poisonous, and some cause allergic reactions, so when in doubt, *do not* eat them unless you have first checked with your local agricultural extension service. With that in mind, here's a list of flowers that can be enjoyed by both the eye and the palate, categorized by whether they are most appropriate with sweet or savory dishes, or both.

Sweet—anise hyssop, elderberry, honeysuckle, lavender, lemon balm, rose, scented geranium, violet.

Savory—borage, calendula, chive, chervil, chrysanthemum, coriander, dandelion, day lily, dill, fennel, lovage, nasturtium, rosemary, sage, squash, thyme.

Sweet/savory—daisy, dianthus, lilac, mint, pansy.

FLOWER FEASTING GUIDELINES

If you grow edible flowers, your garden can dictate the menu. You can combine types of flowers, but don't go overboard—with their complex, sometimes contrary flavors, too many flowers can spoil the broth even faster than too many cooks. Flowers shouldn't dominate dishes; they should provide subtle flavors.

A mesclun salad is an ideal setting for edible flowers. To create a balance between flowers and greens, use about four parts greens to one part flowers. Great salad flowers include crisp and spicy nasturtium, chive, and borage. To match the flowers' delicate textures, it's best to use tender greens such as Bibb, endive, red oak leaf, arugula, and mâche. Toss the greens with a light vinaigrette and then gently mix in the flowers.

Spicy flowers also are excellent for infusing oils. For a pint of oil, you'll need about 1½ cups of flower petals. Mild-flavored oils like canola work well, but even more assertive extra-virgin olive oil works with the right choice of flower—lavender, thyme, or fennel, for example. Fill a bottle with oil



To make plain custard water-color pretty, add Johnny-jump-ups. This effect is created by pouring in the custard after you put the flowers in the ramekin. The flowers will rise to the top.



Edible flowers flavor a savory appetizer. Here, the author adds lavender and chive blossoms to a hinge-top jar containing goat cheese and extra-virgin olive oil. After a few days, the flowers flavor the oil, which in turn permeates the cheese.

and flowers, and heat gently in a pan of water for about thirty minutes. Store tightly covered for at least ten days. To keep infused oils fresh, store them in the refrigerator.

Infused oils also can create a beautiful and easy hors d'oeuvre. Place a round of goat cheese in a jar that has a tight seal. Pour in olive oil to cover, add strongly flavored flowers like lavender and chive, and refrigerate for a few days. The blossoms' flavors will permeate both the oil and the cheese.

Flower butters look truly exotic, but they're easy to make. Soften a half pound of butter to room temperature. Mix in three tablespoons of finely slivered petals and a few drops of lemon juice, and then pack the butter into crocks or ramekins.

To make flower-flavored sugars, add two parts flowers to one part sugar in alternate layers. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and store for at least two weeks. Roses, scented geraniums, and honeysuckle are good choices for floral sugars, which can be used for sweetening cookies or delicate cakes.



Sugar and egg whites crystallize violets. The petals are brushed with an egg-white wash, dipped in superfine sugar, and allowed to dry. This method also can be used to crystallize other small flowers.

No ordinary seasoning. Slivered rose petals make a delicate but fragrant sauce for chicken breasts; a splash of rose water echoes the flavor. The same flower that flavors the dish decorates the plate.



ROSE-PETAL CHICKEN BREASTS

This delicate chicken dish has a slightly exotic flavor. Serve with plain steamed vegetables. *Serves four.*

2 whole boneless, skinless chicken breasts
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. butter
2 Tbs. peeled and minced fresh ginger (about a 2-in. piece)
Small clove garlic, minced (optional)
¼ cup dry sherry
2 Tbs. rose water (available at Middle Eastern stores, specialty markets, or boutiques like Crabtree & Evelyn)
1 tsp. honey
2 Tbs. finely chopped chives
1 cup petals from a strongly scented rose, slivered

Halve each chicken breast. Put each half breast between two sheets of waxed paper and lightly pound to a uniform thickness. Season with salt and pepper.

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. When it begins to bubble, add the ginger and garlic and sauté for 2 min. Raise the heat to medium high, add the breasts, and sauté until lightly golden, about 3 min. on each side. Transfer the chicken to a plate and keep warm.

Turn the heat to high and add the sherry, rose water, and honey to the pan. As the sauce bubbles, stir up the browned bits that remain in the pan. Simmer for 1 min. and then stir in the chives and rose petals. To serve, cut the breasts into slices, arrange on warm plates, and spoon some sauce on top.

CRYSTALLIZED VIOLETS

When the first violets unfurl their blossoms in April, I rush to pick the most beautiful for candied violets. Rose petals and lilac florets also take well to candying.

Egg whites
Water
Violets
Superfine sugar

Beat egg whites with a few drops of water. Hold a violet by the stem. With a small, clean paintbrush, coat the violet petals (both sides) with the egg whites. Dip the flowers in superfine sugar and shake off the excess. Dry them on waxed paper; larger flowers may have to be turned with tweezers to allow them to dry completely. When the flowers have dried, snip off the stems. Store them in an airtight container; the violets will keep indefinitely.

BAKED CUSTARD WITH VIOLETS

Easy to prepare and not too fancy, this custard is a comforting yet pretty dessert. *Serves eight.*

¾ cup violet or Johnny-jump-up blossoms
3 extra-large eggs
2 extra-large egg yolks
½ cup sugar
3 cups whole milk
¾ tsp. flower water or vanilla extract

Heat the oven to 350°F.

Divide the violets among eight 6-oz. ramekins.

Whisk together the eggs, yolks, and sugar. Add the milk and flower water, and stir until the sugar dissolves. Divide the custard among the ramekins; the violets will float to the top. Set the dishes into a larger baking dish. Pour very hot water into the outer dish until it reaches halfway up the ramekins. Carefully put the baking dish, with the ramekins, in the oven. Lower the temperature to 325° and bake 45 to 50 min., until a knife inserted into the center of the custard comes out nearly clean. Serve warm or chilled.

SOURCES FOR FLOWERS AND SEEDS

Edible flowers are delicate, so it's best to grow your own or buy them locally. If that's not possible, some companies will ship.

Flowers only

Melissa's By Mail,
 PO Box 21127, Los Angeles,
 CA 90021; 800/588-0151.

Quail Mountain Herbs,
 PO Box 1049, Watsonville,
 CA 95077; 408/722-8456.
 Contact this distributor for
 the retailer closest to you.

Wild Oats Community
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 California, Colorado, Kansas,
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Seeds only

The Cook's Garden, PO
Box 535, Londonderry, VT
05148-0535; 802/824-3400.

The Gourmet Gardener,
8650 College Blvd.,
Suite 205, Overland Park,
KS 66210; 913/345-0490.

Shepherd's Garden Seeds,
30 Irene St., Torrington, CT
06790; 203/482-3638.

Elena Marcheso Moreno grew up cooking in her family's restaurants. Now she writes and cooks in McLean, Virginia, and is currently writing a cookbook. She grows up to a dozen types of edible flowers every summer. ♦

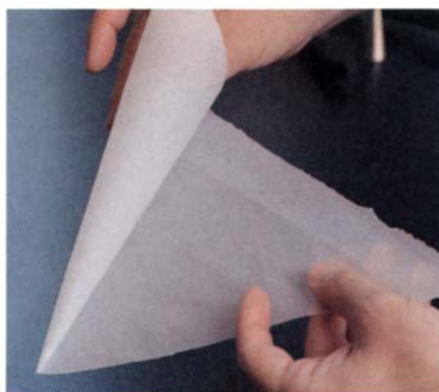
Pastry Bags in a Pinch

Kitchen parchment is perfect for making disposable pastry bags, which can save on clean-up or be used for last-minute decorating when a cloth pastry bag isn't available. Half of a standard 16x24-inch sheet will make a large cone, sufficient to hold a cup or more of filling. A smaller cone will give you even more control when doing detailed decorating.

To make a large cone, first divide a full sheet into two equal 16x12-inch halves. Fold one short side of the sheet over a long side, overlapping by four inches and dividing the sheet into two right triangles that look as if a corner has been cut off. Gently crease the fold and then cut along the fold with scissors or a knife.

Set the triangle down with the right

a fine line for pastry work, while a larger hole will accommodate a metal decorating tip. As a rule, cut off the equivalent of half the length of the metal tip. As with any pastry bag, don't overfill it; you should be able to fold the open end down to completely enclose the filling.



Keep the point of the cone sharp.



Paper pastry bags will create simple lines, or they can be used with a decorative tip.



Once filled, fold the bag closed for control.

Start with the 90° angle pointing toward you. Roll the right side of the paper over to start forming a cone.

angle closest to you. With your right hand holding the right corner and your left hand holding down the center of the triangle, roll with your right hand inward to begin forming a cone. Pick up the cone and wind the loose edge around the cone, with the point ending above the rim of cone. Adjust the paper to bring the cone to a sharp point and fold the flap into the cone. To secure it, staple one wall of the cone or tear a narrow tab in the folded-over portion and bend it down.

Cut off the point of the cone with scissors or a knife. A small hole will give you

To make smaller cones, cut a full-size sheet into two 12x16-inch halves, and then cut again to create four 8x12-inch rectangles.

—Jay Harlow, a chef, food writer, and consultant, Berkeley, California

Preparing Artichokes

Artichokes are a delicious addition to many dishes and are just as wonderful eaten on their own. But getting artichokes ready for the pot or grill takes a bit of work.

There are a few ways you can prepare artichokes, depending on whether you plan them whole for boiling or steaming, just the hearts for stewing or grilling, or just the bottoms for classical presentations. The method for preparing bottoms and hearts renders the artichokes entirely edible, while whole artichokes are meant to be eaten by pulling off one leaf at a time and dipping the tender portion at the base of the leaf into warm lemon butter, flavored mayonnaise, or hollandaise. Baby artichokes, about 1½ inches in diameter, can also be eaten whole. All these tiny artichokes need is to have their stem ends trimmed, outer leaves removed, and leaf tips clipped; they're particularly delicious deep-fried.

The cut area of an artichoke darkens quickly. Acid inhibits this discoloration, so as you work, rub the cut surfaces with a juicy lemon half. When you've finished trimming an artichoke, drop it into a bowl of cold water with a few tablespoons of lemon juice in it. If you don't have lemon juice on hand, substitute a mild vinegar.

To prepare whole artichokes, cut off the stem end to about one inch. With scissors, snip the sharp spines from each of the outer leaves. If you wish, the smaller leaves can be removed from around the base.

If artichoke hearts are called for, begin as above by trimming the stem. Then, starting from the base, bend back each leaf and snap it off. Continue until you reach leaves that are pale and tender up to within an inch of the top. With a ser-



Rub the artichokes with lots of lemon. The acid in the lemon juice helps keep the cut portions of the artichoke from oxidizing and turning brown.



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Remove the sharp spines, tough leaves, and colorful choke for entirely edible artichoke hearts. If the hearts are too large for easy serving, they can be halved or quartered before cooking.

rated knife, cut the top of the leaves off so that only tender pale leaves remain (see photo above). Removing the small, tough, purple leaves and silky hairs called the “choke” is easier once the artichoke has been halved or quartered. Simply cut the choke out with a sharp paring knife. If you’re using the artichoke hearts whole, insert your thumbs in the center of the artichoke to gently open it up, thus

exposing the choke. Use a teaspoon to scrape it out, being sure to get every bit (see photo below).

Remember to rub each new cut with lemon juice. The last step for artichoke hearts is to trim the bottoms of the remaining leaf bases with a paring knife (see photo at right). Drop the artichoke hearts in lemon water as they’re finished, keeping them there until you’re ready to cook them.

Artichoke bottoms (which some also call artichoke hearts) are prepared



Scoop out the tough, hairy choke with a spoon.

like the hearts, except that you must snap away every leaf down to the choke. Cut the choke out and trim away the leaf bases, just as if you were preparing artichoke hearts. You’ll be left with a



Trim the bottoms for a neat presentation. Work on one artichoke at a time and keep them in lemon water until you’re ready to cook them.

concave “cup” that’s perfect for filling or slicing.

—Ruth Lively, a freelance food editor and frequent contributor to *Fine Cooking*, New Haven, Connecticut

Artichoke photos: Faith Echtermeyer



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Opening a Wine Bottle

Hundreds of different wine-opening gadgets are on the market, but the most efficient are the simplest designs that employ either a spiral- or screw-type auger. The type of auger determines the technique needed to open a bottle of wine successfully. Not understanding the difference between a screw and a spiral can lead to many a broken cork. Regardless of the type of corkscrew you use, the auger should be long enough to reach the bottom of the cork. As a rule, the higher the quality of wine, the longer the cork will be.

CUTTING THE FOIL

Use an old paring knife or the blade attached to your corkscrew to cut the foil below the ridge on the neck. This ridge is intended to prevent the bottle from dripping when pouring, but it also provides a handy guide for cutting the foil. Cutting below the ridge also allows you to clean the neck well; this is especially important with older bottles of wine, where must often accumulates under the foil during

years of cellaring. Wipe the neck and the exposed surface of the cork with a clean cloth or paper towel.

SCREW OPENERS

Generally found on inexpensive double-lever or butterfly corkscrews, a screw is usually sufficient for younger bottles of wine which tend to have firmer corks that can withstand greater stress during removal. But even with a young wine, a screw may shred the cork since it's essentially compressing the cork as it forces its way into the bottle.

Position the point of the screw in the center of the cork and screw it in until the arms rise almost to a vertical posi-



tion. Push the arms down to the side. If the cork has not yet come free of the bottle, screw the auger in a little farther and extract it.

SPIRAL OPENERS

Spiral augers are found on many openers, from "T" designs to waiter's corkscrews and Screwpulls. Rather than drilling a hole in the center as a screw auger does, a spiral threads its way through the cork so that when you pull it out, it's grasping a large amount of the cork.

One mistake that people frequently make with a spiral is putting the point directly in the

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center of the cork. The point of the spiral, when turned, describes a hollow circle. Therefore, when the point of the spiral is put in the center, the auger will actually pierce the side of the cork.

Position the point to one side of the center by tipping the spiral to 45° with the point facing down into the cork. Pierce the cork with the tip and then stand the spiral up so that its hollow center forms a circle around the center of the cork. Screw it in and pull out the cork.



WAITER'S CORKSCREWS

The waiter's corkscrew combines the advantages of a spiral auger with the

ease of a pivoting lever. Screw in the auger (using the method for spiral openers) just until you can rest the foot of the corkscrew on the lip of the bottle. Pull up on the lever just enough to dislodge the cork (see photo at left). Then screw in the spiral the rest of the way and pull up slowly to remove the cork (see photo at right). If the cork is still partially in the neck of the bottle, grasp the cork and twist it as you pull it; never pull the cork straight out with your hand, as it may break.

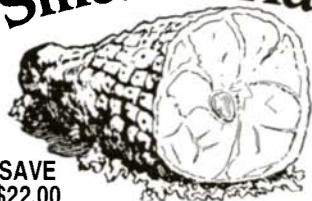
CHECKING THE CORK

Examine the bottom of the cork to see that it's moist. More expensive wines may have lettering branded on the cork. Check to see that the branding matches the label; this will tell you that the wine in the bottle most likely is what's claimed on the label. There's no need to smell the cork. Now that the cork is out, I'm sure you know what to do.

—Josh Eisen, a freelance food and wine writer and teacher, New York City ♦



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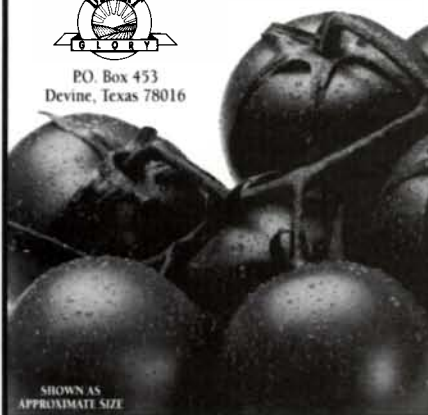
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In this department, we show off the work of cooks who are good at showing off their food. The featured cook selects a few signature dishes and explains how each one is assembled and presented.

Stylish Seafood

BY ELKA GILMORE



Japanese Box Filled with Small Seafood Dishes. For this appetizer, I use a hand-made Japanese *bento* box to present four small plates (above). I choose whimsical pottery for each dish, which makes the presentation even more intriguing and fun. One of the dishes is always an oyster “shooter,” which is quickly fried and served in its shell on a spoonful of salsa.



Kasu-Marinated Sturgeon with Pickled-Plum Vinaigrette & Enoki Mushrooms. The farm-raised sturgeon fillets are marinated in *kasu*—sake lees—before cooking (above). I compress rice in a Japanese rice-cake mold and wrap it in strips of *nori*. I decorate the plate with an abstract design made from beet juice that has been reduced and combined with ginger oil. I use a simple plastic squeeze bottle to create the zigzag pattern.

Grilled Ahi Tuna with Miso-Roasted Eggplant & Tomato Ginger Jam. I cut the ahi tuna into log shapes, which I grill briefly so

they’re seared on the outside and very rare on the inside (below). I cut the log diagonally and stand each half vertically on the plate. I arrange slices of Japanese eggplant that have been roasted with a miso coating around the outside of the tuna in a flower-petal shape. A few spoonfuls of red-wine truffle sauce finishes the dish.

Elka Gilmore is the executive chef of the restaurant Elka in San Francisco, which specializes in seafood prepared in a Franco-Japanese style. She’s also the executive chef of Liberté in San Francisco, which celebrates French cooking in America. ♦



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Controlling Color Changes in Vegetables



BY SHIRLEY O. CORRIHER

Have you ever been frustrated by fruits and vegetables changing color as you cook them? Bright green beans sometimes turn dreary army-drab; red cherries can take on a blue tinge. Many vegetable colors are sensitive to chemical changes. Knowing what these are can help you prevent foods from turning off-color when true colors are important.

KEEP GREENS BRIGHT

Green vegetables get their bright color from chlorophyll, a green pigment involved in photosynthesis in plants. Many atoms of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen join with only one atom of magnesium to make a chlorophyll molecule. This magnesium atom is easily replaced by other substances with which the chlorophyll comes in contact. When this happens, the bright green color of the vegetable changes to a dull olive. To keep the greens bright, you have to keep the magnesium from being lost.

One way to control color is by choosing your cookware carefully. The iron and tin in metal cookware actually work their way into the vegetables and replace the magnesium in the chlorophyll, causing the green to turn an unappetizing gray-brown. For this reason, never cook green vegetables in a cast-iron skillet or in a tin-lined pan.

Old cookbooks advise cooking green vegetables in unlined copper pots to turn them a beautiful bright green. Like iron and tin, copper also works its way into chlorophyll and pushes out magnesium, but the copper-chlorophyll compound that results is bright green, not drab. While copper in trace amounts is harmless, in larger amounts, it's toxic, so it isn't really wise to cook vegetables in unlined copper pots.

Acids also react with the magnesium in chlorophyll, causing true green vegetables to turn a drab olive. This can be a problem if you dress green vegetables with an acidic sauce. Remember how pretty the snow peas and broccoli look in a pasta primavera with a vinaigrette dressing when you first stir them in, and how awful they look 30 minutes later? To keep the vegetables from changing color, you have three options—wait to put the vinaigrette on until just before serving, switch to a nonacidic dressing (see recipe at right), or use the green vegetables raw. Raw vegetables have a waterproof protective coating that keeps the acid from getting to the chlorophyll.

The lemon juice or vinegar you might use in a sauce for vegetables is quite strong, but even mild acids react with the magnesium in chlorophyll. Most vegetables contain acids that dissolve imme-



Acids ruin the bright color of cooked green vegetables.

A nonacidic sauce like Lemon-Chile Oil flavored with lemon zest (but no juice) preserves the bright color of the asparagus at left, while acidic vinaigrette turns the asparagus above a drab olive green.

diately in the water they're cooked in. How do you prevent the vegetable's own acids that are released during cooking from ruining its color?

Baking soda added to the cooking water neutralizes the acids in the vegetable and works beautifully to keep the color bright. However, the soda turns the crisp cell walls to mush and wrecks the vegetable's texture.

The classic French method of cooking green vegetables uncovered in a large pot of salted water works because the large amount of water dilutes the acids and prevents the color from changing. Also, many of these acids have low boiling points. If you leave the lid off, some of the acids will evaporate.

Steaming and microwaving in a small amount of water are good methods to retain the color of vegetables. Although the lid of the cooking container traps the volatile acids, the vegetables aren't soaking in an acidic liquid.

The green is easier to save in commercially frozen vegetables than it is in fresh ones because they were briefly boiled before they were frozen. This

blanching removes some of the acids in the vegetables that cause the color change. Of course, you can do this too. Briefly boil your vegetables to draw out their acids, dunk them in cold water, and then finish cooking them in fresh water.

The big secret for saving the bright color of green vegetables is a short cooking time. Seven minutes is the magic number. As vegetables cook, the cell walls break down, allowing acids to get at the chlorophyll. The color gradually starts changing after 5 or 6 minutes, but doesn't really become noticeable until after 7 minutes. By 10 minutes, the change is quite noticeable, and by 15 minutes, the vegetable is a yellowish-olive green.

Any vegetable that has to cook longer than 7 minutes is a problem, because by the time it's tender, the bright color is lost. One way around this is to cut vegetables into smaller pieces so that they cook faster. Or, you can employ a faster cooking method, like stir-frying or microwaving.

KEEP REDS FROM TURNING BLUE

Water-soluble pigments called anthocyanins give plants beautiful red, purple, and blue colors. Eggplant, radishes, red-skinned potatoes, red cabbage, cherries, red apples, red grapes, blueberries, raspberries, and pomegranates get their red and blue hues from anthocyanins.

These compounds change color as the acidity changes. In general, the compounds remain red while they're in acidic surroundings but turn blue when they become more alkaline. Have you ever

cooked red cabbage and watched it turn an unappetizing blue? What happened was that some of the acids evaporated, the cabbage became less acidic, and it simply turned blue. You only had to add lemon juice or vinegar and the cabbage would have turned back to red.

Cherries in muffins may have a blue ring around them for the same reason. The baking powder or baking soda in the muffin batter creates an alkaline environment and the ordinarily red juices from the cherries turn blue. You might be able to correct this by making the batter slightly more acidic by adding a little lemon juice or by switching to buttermilk or sour cream in the recipe.

Have you noticed the bluish cast that some walnut breads have? Walnuts contain anthocyanins next to their skins, and this causes a blue discoloration in all but very acidic baked goods. You can prevent this by first roasting the walnuts, which causes a chemical reaction that changes these compounds into other compounds that don't discolor.

Another problem with these beautiful red and blue compounds is that they are water-soluble. Any sauce, dressing, or marinade containing watery ingredients (fruit juice, vinegar, wine) can wash the color of beautiful red flame seedless grapes or strawberries right out. To prevent this, you can add the liquid to the fruit or vegetables just before serving, or you can mask the problem by using a liquid that stains or intensifies the red color, like dark fruit juice or balsamic vinegar.

ORANGE AND YELLOW ARE MORE STABLE

Orange and yellow vegetables are much easier to deal with than green or red ones. That's because carotenoids—the yellow, orange, and red-orange pigments in fruits and vegetables—dissolve in oil, not water, and so they're relatively stable. The fact that these vegetables retain their color well makes them ideal candidates for longer cooking methods like baking and braising.

Some of these vegetables do become paler with prolonged cooking, however. You may have seen squash that looks washed-out—a sign that it was overcooked. Carrots have such large amounts of carotene that they usually retain their color even when overcooked.

KEEP WHITES FROM YELLOWING

White vegetables that are cooked in water that is alkaline can turn yellow. Potatoes will turn a cream color, or even develop bands of yellow. Rice and onions will turn yellow, and cabbage and cauliflower may show some yellowing when cooked in alkaline water. If you notice this happening, add a little cream of tartar, lemon juice, or vinegar to the cooking water. French chefs cook some white vegetables in a *blanc* made by adding lemon juice and flour to water. The lemon juice combats any alkalinity in the water, while the flour might simply coat the vegetables with a fine layer of white.

LEMON-CHILE OIL

Try this sauce over steamed asparagus spears or broccoli for a bright lemon flavor without turning the vegetables a drab olive green.

1 tsp. red pepper flakes
1 shallot, minced
¼ tsp. freshly ground white or black pepper
½ cup vegetable oil (peanut, corn, or a blend)
Zest of 2 lemons, grated

In a small saucepan, bring the red pepper flakes, shallot, pepper, and oil to a simmer and continue to simmer on low heat for about 5 min. Remove from the heat and let stand 5 min. Add the zest and let the mixture stand overnight, or at least 2 hours. Strain if desired before serving. This oil will keep for weeks in the refrigerator.

SCIENCE PROJECT

Watch how acidity affects the color of red vegetables. Stuff two glasses with thinly sliced red cabbage and fill with warm water. Add a tablespoon of lemon juice (an acid) to one of the glasses, and a tablespoon of baking soda (an alkali) to the other. The acidic cabbage turns bright red, while the alkaline slaw turns blue.



Shirley O. Corriher, of Atlanta, Georgia, teaches food science and cooking classes around the country. Fine Cooking is happy to welcome Shirley as a contributing editor. She'll be writing regularly for the Food Science department. ♦

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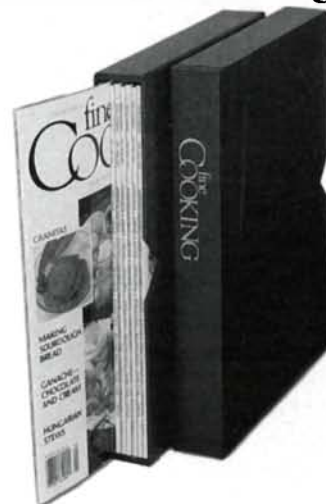
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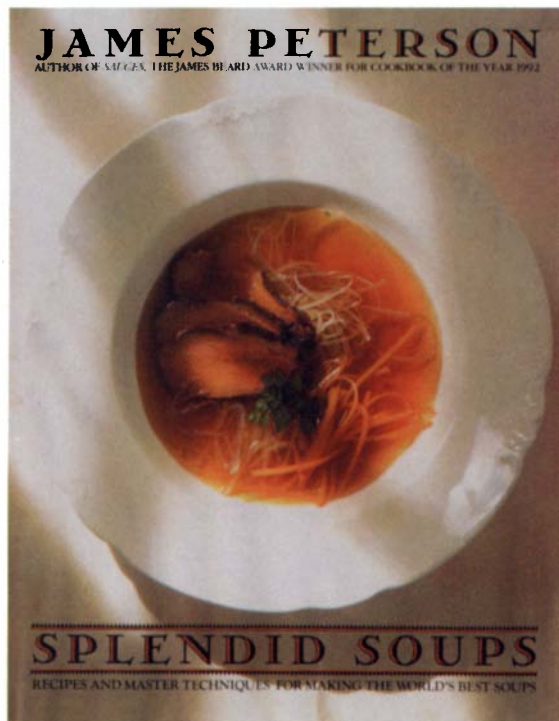
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Soup, Beautiful Soup

According to the French food writer Robert Coutine, genuine oxtail soup isn't merely a stock, but an "elixir." I think this is true for all well-made soups, which minister to both body and soul more quickly and completely than any other type of food. If you want to know how to make a soup to feed any kind of hunger, the indis-



pensable guide is James Peterson's *Splendid Soups: Recipes and Master Techniques for Making the World's Best Soups* (BANTAM, 1993. \$29.95, HARDCOVER; 524 PP. ISBN 0-553-07505-5).

The key phrase here is "master techniques." Like all great teachers, Peterson's ultimate goal is to free his students from the tyranny of dependence. To that end, each section of the book includes some form of generic instruction. For example, one of the introductory chapters presents a discussion of basic "ethnic" flavorings such as *soffritto*, *mirepoix*, the Catalan *picada*, and the Indonesian *bumbo*, from which the adventurous cook may extrapolate an international meal with any ingredients she or he has at hand. The recipes are organized into chapters according to main ingredient (vegetables, fish, etc.), and each chapter includes a summary of general soup-making techniques for that ingredi-

ent, as well as a step-by-step guide. As Peterson points out, "Once you understand the logical progression of steps, preparing a fish soup (e.g.) from even the most exotic place is a simple matter of substituting different ingredients at various stages during the cooking."

The glossary organizes and summarizes all this information into chart form. "Patterns for Improvising Soups" comprises a 20-page step-by-step outline that is cross-referenced by ingredient and flavor variations, country of origin, and even name.

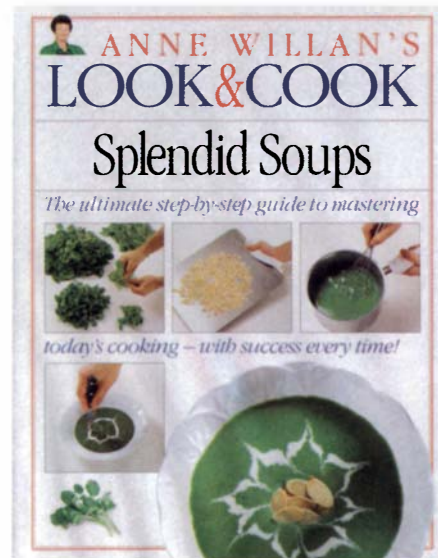
The basis of any great soup is stock, and Peterson demystifies this most mysterious (at least for some of us) process, assuring the "panic-stricken" that total kitchen working time for a good stock can be as little as 15 or 20 minutes despite the hours of cooking time. The recipes include different types of meat and vegetable broths and consommés, as well as less familiar items like Miso Soup and Thai Hot & Spicy Broth. Numerous recipes for additions like noodles, stuffed pasta, and dumplings are also provided.

Each chapter begins with a thorough discussion of selection and preparation of the main ingredient, more complete here than in some supposedly general-purpose cookbooks. In the fish section, for example, Peterson claims that truly fresh fish will have an expression of "cynicism or indignation," that they "still look surprised at having been caught." I was skeptical about this at first, but when I actually noticed a rather put-upon-looking red snapper at the fish store the other day, I grabbed it. It was fine.

Helpful for cooks at every level, *Splendid Soups* offers an encyclopedia of information without becoming overbearing. There are no photographs, but the recipes are presented with clear and logical ingredient lists, and Peterson's sane and personable voice guides preparation in a conversational and yet professional style, while his anecdotes refer mostly to his experiences as a home cook, preparing beautiful meals for cherished friends, rather than as a professional chef.

A step-by-step illustrated approach can be found in another book that's also

titled *Splendid Soups*, this one by Anne Willan. (DORLING KINDERSLEY, 1994. \$19.95, HARDCOVER; 127 PP. ISBN 1-56458-507-7). Part of her "Look & Cook" series, this full-color, hardcover glossy is geared toward—but isn't just for—beginners. Each recipe presents photographs of the needed equipment, the ingredients (a cute little measuring cup of stock, cheese whole and grated), and the step-by-step procedures required for various preparatory techniques (how to roast, peel, and seed bell peppers; how to clarify stock; how to make wontons; how to make decorative cream designs; etc.). Each technique is marked with color-coded numbers to give the correct sequence. The prep and cooking times are all provided, as well as a "shopping list" for each recipe. Experienced cooks may resent this micro-management, but those who sometimes find it difficult to visualize the process will find Willan's book a blessing. Willan gives fewer recipes than Peterson, but she doesn't miss anything important. In fact, while reading this book I felt inspired to



stop and salt some eggplant in order to prepare her Roasted Eggplant Soup with Chili Cream.

After Peterson and Willan, it's hard to imagine needing another soup guide; nevertheless, *Soups*, by Mary F. Taylor, is a lovely and not at all redundant volume. It's part of a series called *New Vege-*

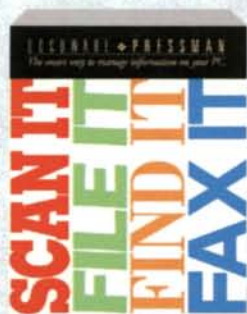
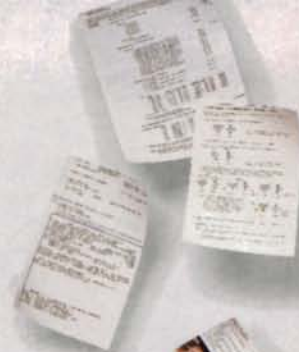
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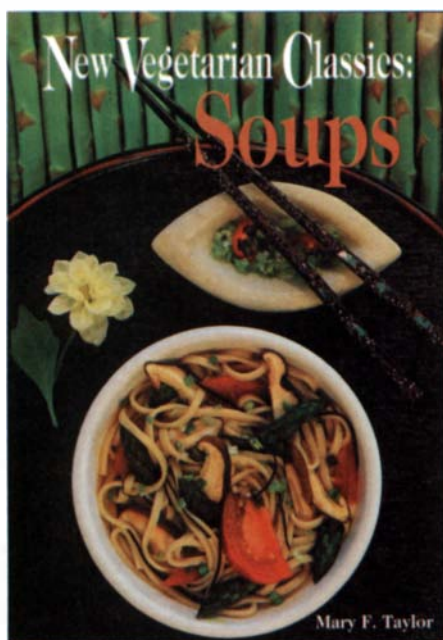
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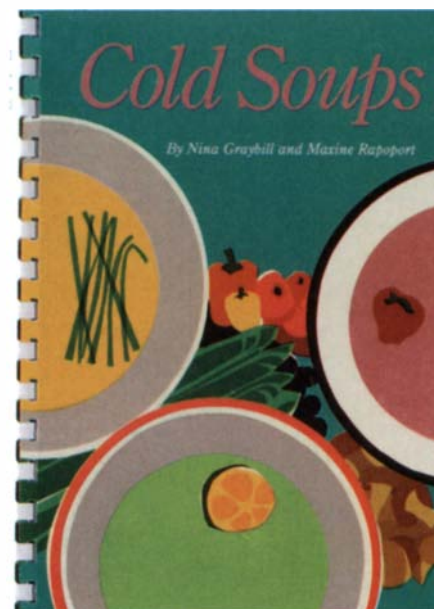


Vegetarian Classics (CROSSING PRESS, 1994. \$18.95, SOFTCOVER; 175 PP. ISBN 0-89594-648-3). Taylor laments that "it's easy to be misled as to the nature of vegetarian soups. If we see them as chicken soup without the

chicken, they are destined to pale in comparison." Nor should vegetarian soups necessarily be "tossed together arbitrarily." This is certainly possible, but "a successful soup is well conceived from the start." Well schooled in the classics, Taylor studied cooking in Paris and applies the fundamentals of her training to vegetarian cooking.

And the results are worthwhile. After a brief introduction on equipment and ingredients (with great hints like adding a raw potato to relieve an overly salted soup) and a somewhat longer discussion on the "building blocks" of soup (stock, thickeners, etc.), Taylor presents her recipes by type (light, hearty, etc.) rather than by ingredient, and offers extras like Cumin Scented Croutons, Spiced Sesame Crackers, and Jalapeño Butter. The recipe titles reveal her talent for interesting combinations such as Beet & Fennel Consommé with Gorgonzola Won Tons, as well as a sublime Peach & Pepper Gazpacho. Hearty bean and vegetable soups and chowders don't miss a meat base,

and Anasazi Bean Soup with Rum and Lone Star Bourbon Soup should dispel any myth that vegetarian equals tee-totaler. The twenty or so full-color glossy photos should dispel the other myth that vegetarian equals quaint and rough.



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Another narrowly focused book that's worthwhile—especially for summer—is *Cold Soups*, by Nina Graybill and Maxine Rapoport (FARRAGUT PUBLISHING, 1988. \$10.95, SOFTCOVER; 181 PP. ISBN 0-918535-07-7). After some introductory words on stocks, the more than one hundred recipes prove simple to prepare and elegant to serve, from Curried Cream of Asparagus Soup to Zucchini & Fresh Basil Soup to sweet Sunrise Melon Soup. Some of these would probably also be good hot, and the book includes Cheese Pepper Biscuits and a few other yummy crunchies, as well as a brief section on doctoring canned soups. True, there's little here that an experienced cook might not think of herself, but when summer comes, who wants to think?

Finally, just because it's almost fifty years old doesn't mean we should neglect *The Soup Book*, by Louis P. DeGouy (DOVER, 1974. \$7.95, SOFTCOVER; 414 PP. ISBN 0-486-22998-X), an apprentice to Escoffier, who cooked in the European courts at the turn of the century. His book includes extensive in-

structions for stocks and sauces, with 81 recipes for clear soup alone, not including jellied consommés. There are recipes for Turtle Soup ("take the best sun-dried turtle") and Mock Turtle Soup (those old standbys!) and even Sorrel Soup (which some of us would like to think we've just invented), as well as a plethora of garnishes like Chervil Dimples and Hominy Croutons.

The soups are organized by type (chowder, bisque, etc.). Granted there's some repetition, with each minor variation counting as a separate recipe with its own name, and some confusion (at least three or four leek and potato soups scattered around) in the 804 recipes, but who cares? As much a food writer as a master chef and teacher, DeGouy digresses elegantly on such topics as the chemical processes that result in gelatin, the Portuguese influence on the codfish industry, and the Arab attitude toward salt. Organized in the perhaps dated encyclopedia-entry style of Larousse, *The Soup Book* is otherwise surprisingly modern, which just



goes to show that true gastronomic appreciation is an essentially timeless art.

—Lisa Ornest lives in Coney Island, where she cooks and eats soup regularly. ♦

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Salt



Crystalline key to good cooking

I first became aware of the importance of salt when I started making my own chicken stock. Following instructions never to add salt until the stock has been reduced, I noticed my reduced, unsalted stock had a strong but one-dimensional chicken flavor. There wasn't a hint of the onions, carrots, garlic, thyme, and bay leaf that had simmered for hours in the pot along with the chicken. Then I added the salt. Suddenly it was all there—the full flavor of the vegetables and seasonings in perfect balance with the chicken.

SALT UNLOCKS FLAVORS

On its own or when used to deliberately make something taste salty, salt's flavor is quite distinct. But salt can also enhance the flavors of other ingredients without calling attention to itself. Many foods, particularly starches such as pasta, grains, and potatoes, taste bland, almost insipid, without salt. A judicious seasoning with salt brings out their flavors, smoothes out their bitterness, and makes them taste not salty, but more like themselves.

Odd as it may seem, salt can make some foods taste sweeter. Eggplant, zucchini, and cucumbers benefit from a preliminary salting, which draws out moisture. Because

they're rinsed before being used, they won't taste salty, but as they'll have less water, their natural sugars will be more intense. Think of this process as a reduction and you'll understand what I'm talking about.

Salt also affects the way foods look and smell. I've found that green vegetables cooked without salt quickly fade and start to brown, but salt in the cooking water works as a fixative to keep the color bright. It has the same effect on cauliflower, preventing it from yellowing. Of course, odors have a profound effect on our sense of taste. Salt intensifies aromas, making them more apparent. To understand this better, take two glasses of the same wine, add salt to one, and smell both. The salted one will have a richer aroma.

MORE THAN JUST TABLE SALT

The main varieties of culinary salt are rock salt (halite) and sea salt. Rock salt is found in extensive underground beds, the remains of long-disappeared oceans. It is usually mined, but some producers pump water into the salt beds, dissolve the salt to produce a brine, and then evaporate it back to salt crystals.

Sea salt, not surprisingly, is produced by the evaporation of sea water. Some varieties of sea salt, European bay salt and English Maldon for instance, are harvested from shallow bays where the sun and wind dry up the water and leave behind the salt.

Most other sea salts are obtained by heating vats of sea water until all the water has evaporated and only the salt remains.

To most Americans, salt means table salt, a finely ground, highly refined, processed product with added iodine, magnesium carbonate, and other chemicals. The advantage of table salt is that it doesn't cake. The disadvantage is that it tastes metallic and unremarkable when compared with other salts.

Kosher or coarse salt is less harsh, less bitter, and—to my taste—less salty. I use it for cooking. Be careful when substituting kosher salt for table salt in recipes. The coarse flakes of kosher salt weigh about half as much as the smaller, denser grains of table salt, so you'll want to use slightly more kosher salt than table salt. There's no formula for making substitutions; the best way to judge is simply to taste.

Sea salt has a stronger flavor than kosher salt, with none of the bitterness associated with table salt. I use it as a finishing salt. There are many varieties of sea salt, all with distinct flavors. *Sel gris*, from the Brittany region of France, is gray from trace minerals and has a delicate flavor. *Sel de mer*, from the French Mediterranean is a white sea salt with a distinct ocean flavor. The English sea salt, Maldon, is one of the finer white sea salts. Japanese black sea salt has a strong flavor of the ocean and kelp that's good with fish and fish soups. Hawaiian red salt is interesting for its color, but its flavor is unremarkable.

Salt, once exalted as a symbol of value and permanence, has been vilified in recent years because of reported negative effects on the cardiovascular system. The truth is that salt has a negative effect on a small percentage of people who have high blood pressure. Most of us can enjoy well-salted foods without worry. Those who must cut back on salt should note that most of the sodium in our diets comes not from the salt good cooks add to their food at home and in restaurants, but from the sodium compounds added to processed foods. A diet of freshly prepared, *well-seasoned* food is the perhaps the healthiest, and most enjoyable, diet one can follow.

Ann Wilder, founder and president of Vanns Spices, a specialty spice house in Baltimore, is an authority on the quality and blending of spices and herbs. ♦

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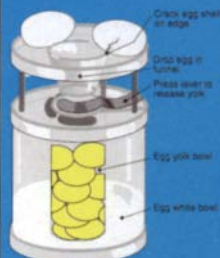


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CALIFORNIA

Festival—48th Annual Carrot Festival, January 28 through February 5, Holtville. Carrot cooking and recipe contest, carrot cookery luncheon, barbecued rib cook-off, and more. For more information, call 619/356-2923.

Festival—49th Annual National Date Festival, February 17–26, Desert Expo Center, Indio. Held in the date capital of the world, the festival includes exhibits of over 100 varieties of dates and citrus, recipe contests and demonstrations, camel and ostrich races, elephant and camel rides, and more. For information, call 800/44INDIO.

Festival—The Monterey Wine Festival, March 23–26, Hyatt Regency Monterey. For information, call 800/656-4282.

FLORIDA

Festival—LaBelle Swamp Cabbage Festival, February 24–26, Barron Park, LaBelle. The festival celebrates the sabal palm, a staple food of the early settlers, and Florida's state tree. For more information, contact Patty Brant or Martha Briede at 813/675-2541.

INDIANA

Festival—Maple Sugaring Days, February 18–19, Fowler Park, Terre Haute. Tour maple sugar cabin to see how maple syrup is made, enjoy maple syrup on pancakes with sausage, and visit a restored pioneer village containing circa 1830s log cabins and a covered bridge from 1848. Call 812/462-3391.

Fair—The Parke County Maple Fair, February 24–26 and March 3–5, Billie Creek Village, Rockville. See syrup being made at maple sugar camps, have a maple syrup pancake breakfast, view displays by Parke County's maple producers, and visit the Butcher Shop for fresh-cured bacon and ham. For information, call 317/569-3430.

LOUISIANA

Seminar—A Taste of New Orleans, March 29 through April 2, New Orleans. Seminar traces the culinary traditions of Creole and Cajun cooking through visits to famous local restaurants, a wine cellar, antique homes with early 19th-century kitchens and herb gardens, the historic French Market, and a culinary antique shop. Sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. For information, call 202/357-4700.

MISSISSIPPI

Festival—20th Annual World Catfish Festival, April 1, Belzoni. Held in the catfish capital, this is the world's largest catfish fry. Call 601/247-4838.

NEW MEXICO

Food Show—The 7th Annual National Fiery Foods Show, March 3–5, Albuquerque Convention Center. Exhibit of hot and spicy foods, cooking demonstrations and cookbook signings, plus kitchenware and art. Call Dave DeWitt at 505/873-9103.

Seminar—Southwestern Culture & Cuisine, February 21–26, Santa Fe. Culinary week sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the Santa Fe School of Cooking. Morning classes on southwestern cooking and afternoon field trips yield insights into the cultures of the southwest. For more information, call 202/357-4700.

PENNSYLVANIA

Dinners—11th Annual "The Book & the Cook," March 22–26, Philadelphia. Cookbook authors collaborate with top Philadelphia restaurants and chefs to design special meals. For information, call 800/537-7676.

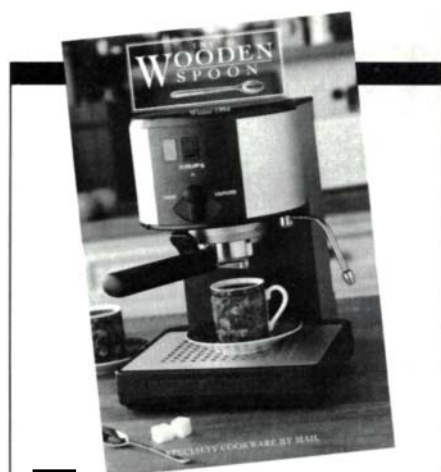
Fair—6th Annual "The Book & the Cook" Fair, March 24–26, Pennsylvania Convention Center. Showcase of gourmet food purveyors and kitchenware manufacturers, plus cooking demonstrations by participating cookbook authors and Philadelphia chefs. For information, call 800/537-7676.

TEXAS

Festival—Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival, March 30 through April 2, Austin. For information, call 512/329-0770.

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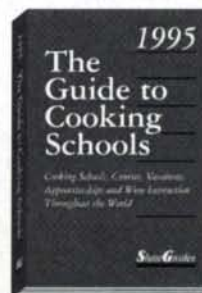
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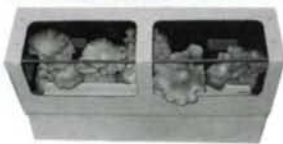
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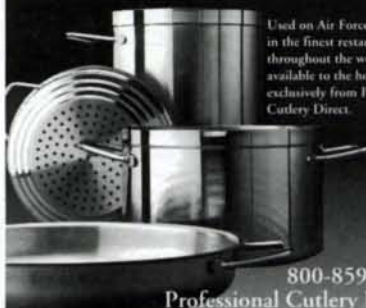
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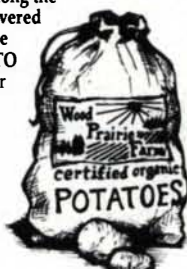
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NUTRITION INFORMATION

| Recipe (analysis per serving) | Page | Calories | | Protein (g) | Carb (g) | Fats (g) | | | | Chol (mg) | Sodium (mg) | Fiber (g) | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|------|----------|-----|----------------|-------------|----------|-----|------|------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|
| | | total | fat | | | total | sat | mono | poly | | | | |
| Artichokes & Garlic Cloves | 26 | 70 | 0% | 3 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 280 | 9 | |
| Fennel Risotto with Shrimp | 26 | 320 | 18% | 16 | 44 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 100 | 460 | 3 | |
| Arugula & Orange Salad | 27 | 70 | 4% | 2 | 10 | 2.5 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0 | 400 | 3 | |
| Chocolate-Cinnamon Sherbet | 27 | 190 | 4% | 5 | 44 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0 | 2 | 75 | 2 | |
| Danish Pastry (almond filled) | 29 | 350 | 45% | 6 | 43 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 60 | 180 | 2 | |
| Danish Pastry (cream-cheese filled) | 29 | 310 | 48% | 5 | 35 | 16 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 75 | 200 | 1 | |
| Mizuna & Minced Chicken | 34 | 140 | 20% | 21 | 7 | 3.0 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 45 | 190 | 3 | |
| Scallops, Lime & Savoy Spinach | 34 | 210 | 29% | 28 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 50 | 410 | 3 | |
| Garlicky Greens, Penne & Broth | 35 | 370 | 10% | 19 | 70 | 4.0 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 40 | 360 | 12 | |
| Peking Duck | 47 | 360 | 61% | 17 | 17 | 24 | 8 | 11 | 3 | 70 | 65 | 2 | 3-ounce serving |
| Mandarin Pancakes | 47 | 100 | 28% | 2 | 16 | 3.0 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | per pancake |
| Garnishes for Peking Duck | 47 | 35 | 0% | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 3 | |
| Sauce for Peking Duck | 47 | 60 | 26% | 1 | 10 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0 | 350 | 0 | |
| Lemon & Herb Fish <i>En Papillote</i> | 55 | 180 | 38% | 24 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 65 | 65 | 1 | based on trout |
| Mixed Shellfish <i>En Papillote</i> | 55 | 130 | 13% | 18 | 7 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 70 | 190 | 1 | |
| Salmon, Wild Rice & Mushrooms | 55 | 340 | 37% | 29 | 26 | 14 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 80 | 120 | 4 | |
| Piquant Snapper or Rockfish | 55 | 280 | 34% | 36 | 9 | 11 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 65 | 390 | 2 | based on snapper |
| Black-Peppercorn Salami | 58 | 100 | 81% | 4 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 220 | 1 | per ounce |
| French Country Bread | 63 | 70 | 6% | 2 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 115 | 1 | per slice |
| Triple-Hump Loaf | 63 | 80 | 16% | 2 | 14 | 1.5 | 0 | 1.0 | 0 | 0 | 135 | 1 | per slice |
| <i>Zataar</i> Flatbread | 64 | 190 | 38% | 4 | 24 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 270 | 1 | |
| Rose-Petal Chicken Breasts | 67 | 200 | 33% | 28 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 85 | 140 | 0 | |
| Baked Custard with Violets | 67 | 150 | 38% | 6 | 17 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 160 | 75 | 0 | |

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

Try a Bite—You'll Love It!



"Pokeweed will kill you," my mother always warned. "One touch from those red berries and you'll swell up and die a hideous death!"

I always knew this was an exaggeration (I bribed my sister to touch one of the berries, and she's still alive), but I still assumed the plant was dangerous. Then this morning, I read an article that said, when cooked correctly, pokeweed is edible. Reading further, I discovered that my mother had been half right. The berries are poisonous, but the new shoots, properly prepared, are

safe. How did the author know?

I doubt this author performed his own experiments. His information probably came from a book. That book got its information from an older edition, and so on back to the old grannies passing down their herbal lore. Perhaps this knowledge came from even further back than that. After all, the cave people were great experimenters.

But how did the cave people discover which parts of the pokeweed were edible? What made those early cooks persevere when sorrowing relatives were

burying the failures? Believe me, if I saw my neighbor keel over after eating a handful of pokeweed, I'd never touch the stuff.

Maybe they had official tasters.

"This looks good!" Og said. "Pretty white flower, lovely aroma...hey! Taster! Over here. I have a possibility."

Nibble, nibble... "Arrgh!"

"Maybe if I cooked it first," Og mused, stepping over the taster. He boiled a mess of pokeweed, and being a cautious cave-man, fed it to a neighbor—who probably swelled up and died a hideous death. I imagine after a few such mistakes, the tribe would be leery of Og and his cooking prowess.

I've read that pokeweed is edible after being boiled in three changes of water, but how was *that* discovered? When I eat something, I don't assume that it would taste better if I boiled it three times.

Og saw the dish of boiled pokeweed beside his neighbor's body. "I guess he won't need it anymore. I'll eat it," said Og. The greens were cold, so he stuck them next to the fire.

When they'd boiled for the second time, he hesitated. "Wasn't that the plant that killed the taster last week?" Unsure, Og tested it on another cave dweller. That person also went to that great cave fire in the sky.

Og abandoned the pokeweed by the fire, where it boiled a third time.

A while later, a ravenous Mrs. Og wandered by. The simmering greens tempted her. Og came back and was horrified to see his beloved swallow the last of the thrice-boiled pokeweed.

Imagine their surprise when Mrs. Og didn't die! After a few more experiments (and possibly the deaths of a few more tribal tasters), the Ogs hit on the boiled-in-three-changes-of-water combination that rendered the dangerous plant harmless—as long as they didn't garnish it with those tempting red berries.

"What a shame," said Widow Og. "They contrasted so nicely with the stewed greens, too."

—Julie G. DeGroat
Theresa, New York ♦

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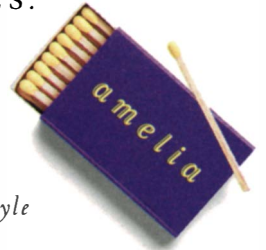
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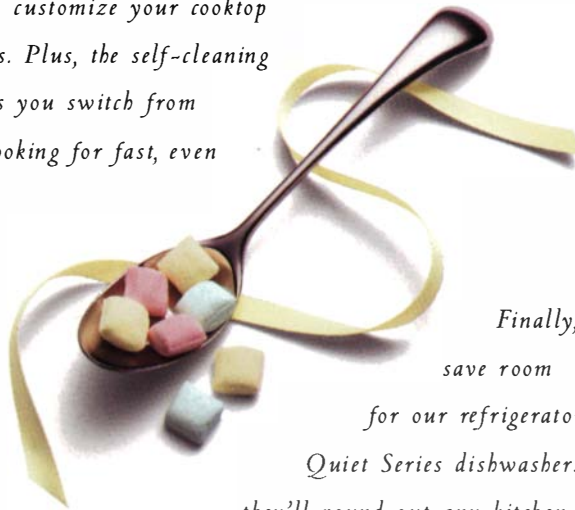
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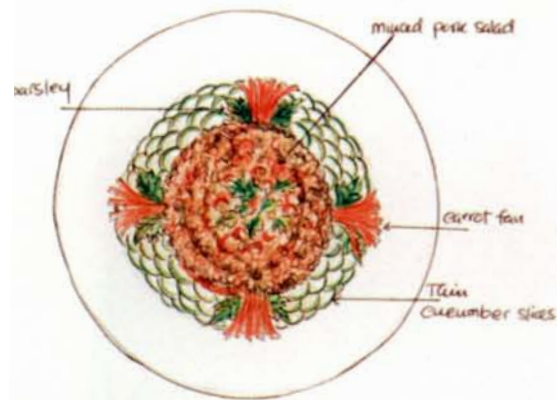
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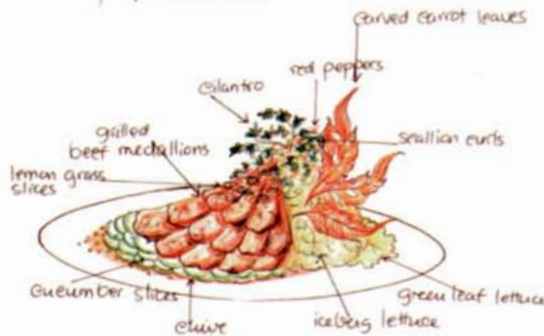
Chiangmai Lamb



Description:

Minced pork salad with mixed spices from Chiangmai, accented with toasted dried chili peppers, chopped scallion and aromatic saw-tooth herb.

Spicy Beef Salad



Description:

Fiery grilled beef medallions spiced with fresh lemon grass, shallot, chili peppers, cilantro and lime. Garnished with garden fresh and carved vegetables.

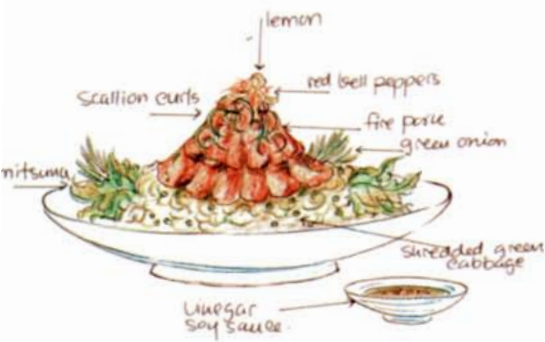
Three-Combination Curry



Description:

Country-style yellow curry with shrimp, chicken, beef, kabocha squash, fuzzy melon in a yellow curry sauce, hot, spicy and peppery, featuring kaffir lime, turmeric and sweet basil leaves.

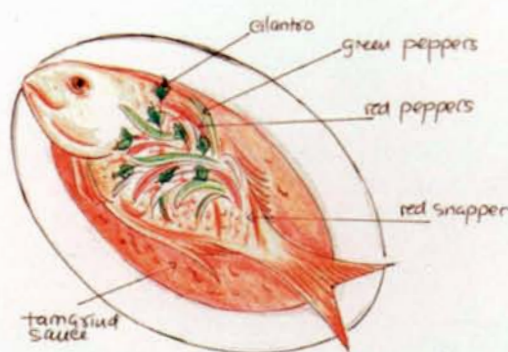
Fire Pork



Description:

Grilled pork medallions seasoned with paprika, minced garlic, shallot, ginger, and sweet rice wine. Served on a mound of finely shredded cabbage and scallion, and accompanied by a vinegar-soy sauce.

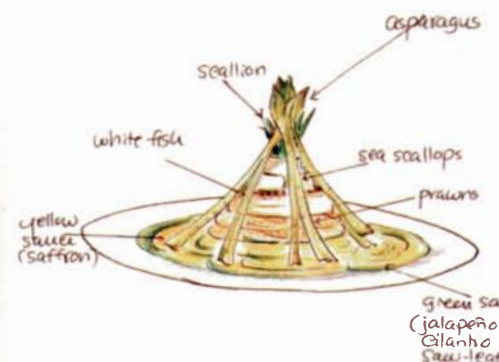
Three-Flavored Red Snapper



Description:

Crisply fried whole red snapper with traditional Bangkok-style three-flavored tamarind sauce: spicy, sweet and sour.

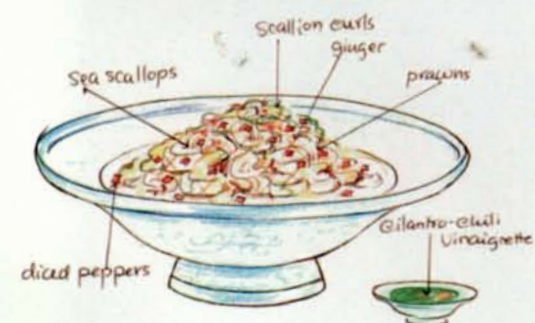
Seafood Pyramid



Description:

Layers of prawns and filleted white fish, topped by a final layer of sea scallops, set over alternating stripes of green and yellow sauces: saw-tooth jalapeño and saffron-jalapeño, and framed by steamed asparagus.

Lobstered Prawns & Sea Scallops



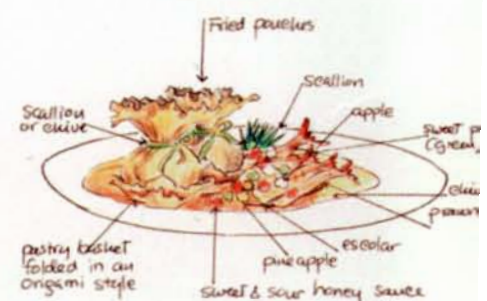
Description:

Prawns and sea scallops sautéed in a lobster sauce with shredded ginger and scallion. Accompanied by a tangy cilantro-chili vinaigrette.

Sketch Cook

The kitchen isn't the only place where Arun Sampanthavivat is an artist. Before he opened his Thai restaurant, Arun's, in Chicago, he imagined all the dishes he planned to serve and sketched them in a notebook. Color, texture, and structure are as important as flavor to this master of both palette and plate.

Golden Fried Pouches



Description:

Golden fried pouches filled with a tasty mixture of shrimp, crabmeat and jicama, glazed with a sweet & sour honey sauce, with succulent prawns, escolar, pineapple, apple, sweet peppers and scallion.